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REFLECTIONS

ON THE

PROPRIETY

OF AN

IMMEDIATE CONCLUSION

OF

PEACE.

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By NICHOLAS VANSITTART, Esq.

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A NEW EDITION,

WITH

CORRECTIONS AND AN APPENDIX;

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LONDON:

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PROBATION

OF AN

IMMEDIATE CONCLUSION

OF

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[The Two Shillings Price]



## REFLECTIONS, &c.

**T**HE summer has, some time since, brought to its conclusion a session of Parliament equally remarkable for the unusual manner in which it was convened, and the magnitude and singularity of the events which were discussed in it. Nor was it less remarkable for the unexampled agreement of opinion which appeared in Parliament, and the general approbation of its proceedings expressed by the nation at large. Yet a party has been found, small indeed in number, but considerable in talents, hardy enough to oppose the public voice, and to endeavour to turn the current of general opinion. In Parliament, their talents were exerted in vain; the same vast majority which, at the opening

of the session, declared in favour of the measures of administration, remained undiminished at its close. But equal industry has been employed out of Parliament, to persuade the nation that its situation was *alarming* and *disastrous*; and that all its calamities proceeded from the measures of the government. The efforts of faction have been disguised under the specious appearance of a desire for peace. The great leader of the Opposition made his last struggle, at the close of the session, in an apparent attempt to promote it; while his partisans have re-echoed far and wide, that the people were only deprived of this inestimable blessing by the ambition and madness of the Minister.

A charge of such magnitude deserves the most serious examination, and will not readily be credited against a Minister whose general principles have been unquestionably pacific. To encourage foreign commerce, and promote internal improvement; to fix public credit on a solid basis, by a continual reduction of the national debt; and to secure an ample revenue by the resources of attention



and oeconomy—these are the general outlines of this system: and by these measures the nation had risen, during his administration, to an equalled degree of prosperity. Yet he is supposed to have abandoned these principles, at the moment when by their gradual effect he had surmounted every difficulty; had attained the power of diminishing the public burdens, and had been rewarded with an unexampled height of popularity and influence. He is supposed to have been actuated by the inconsiderate violence of passion, or deluded by some wild prospect of chimerical ambition.

Improbable as this charge may seem, it has been repeatedly and boldly urged, and supported by much artful reasoning in a variety of forms. The arguments of Mr. Fox and his friends have been collected, and some others added, in a letter to Mr. Pitt; published under the name of a Mr. Willon; which is the more specious as it professes great moderation, and pays an artful court to popular opinions. I mean, therefore, to offer some observations on this letter, since it is so important, that on such a subject



the public opinion should be right, that every man is justified in exerting himself in the discussion: for on the general approbation of the measures of the government their efficacy must principally depend; and in those measures,—not the rise or fall of some party in the state—not the prosperity of this country only, are concerned—but the fate of distant nations and generations yet unborn.

After painting, in very alarming colours, the “calamities which affect our commerce” and manufactures,” Mr. Wilson proceeds to state as their primary cause\* “the prevalence and extension of the war-system throughout Europe, supported as it has been by the universal adoption of the funding system,” and in consequence of which, he supposes the present war, to which he ascribes those calamities, to have been undertaken.

\* See Mr. Wilson’s letter, pages 2 and 3, of the second edition, which is always referred to. He says, “this idea has not been laid before the public.” I cannot congratulate Mr. Wilson on the *novelty* of his discovery, great part of what he says on this subject is to be found in Gulliver’s Travels; the rest in Hume’s Essays, Rousseau, and an ironical Vindication of Natural Society, written by Mr. Burke when very young, in imitation of Lord Bolingbroke’s style.

He observes, that the "effects of the progress of knowledge on the intercourse of nations with each other have been hitherto in many respects injurious."

"Among savages the means of intercourse are restricted to tribes who are neighbours, and hostilities confined in the same manner. As knowledge increases, the means of intercourse extend; and nations not in immediate vicinity learn to mingle in each other's affairs. The history of European nations proves this; among whom treaties offensive and defensive have been continually extending and multiplying for the two last centuries, as their intercourse has increased; and wars, without becoming less frequent, have become far more general, bloody, and expensive."

It is difficult to suppose that a man acquainted with the first elements of history, could make such an assertion seriously; to quote is sufficient to *expose* it, and I shall content myself with asking Mr. Wilson, whether the wars of Attila, the invasions of France by the Normans, and of England by the Danes, were

were less destructive than modern hostilities? It may not, however, be useless to remark, that a war of plunder and desolation is infinitely more expensive, because more ruinous, than a war supported by loans and taxes; and that the object of war among barbarians is the *extermination* of their enemies; among civilized nations, their *humiliation* only. In the first case, the whole nation, especially in small states, is in arms; and is exposed to the danger of pillage and of slaughter: in the second, only a small part of the community risk their lives, and the majority are even secure in their property. The extremes of desolation are prevented, and the mutual observance of good faith is enforced by a general law of nations submitted to by common consent. One nation has, indeed, lately dared to trample openly on this law, and disavow its principles. To restore it to respect, and to prevent mankind from relapsing into a state of barbarism, are among the causes which have forced Great Britain to have recourse to arms.

From the desultory manner in which Mr. Wilson's pamphlet is written, it would be tedious



tedious and unsatisfactory to answer it page by page; but his arguments will be found to depend entirely on the following assertions, which (without precluding myself from noticing the other arguments of Mr. Fox and his party, or from taking such a general view of the subject, as may be necessary to elucidate it more completely) I shall examine in their natural order.

That the war in which this country is engaged against France, is totally unnecessary and unprovoked—that all the distress of our commerce has been owing to the war—that peace may be obtained—and that it is the only means of preventing the ruin of our commerce, and perhaps of our government.

“ By a few,” says Mr. Wilson\*, “ it is asserted that the French were determined to quarrel with us, and that they declared war against us, at a time that it was unexpected and unprovoked. This language, however, is held by very few; and is indeed so utterly inconsistent both with fact and probability, that nothing but ignorance or dis-

\* Page 34.

“*ingenuouſneſs* can employ it.” This aſſertion which Mr. Wilſon treats with ſo much contempt, was made in a *royal meſſage*, and a vote nearly unanimous of *both Houſes of Parliament* \*.—To ſuch authority a good ſubject, if he cannot give implicit credit, will at leaſt pay reſpectful attention. Before he ventures publicly to contradict it, he will require the moſt cogent arguments, the moſt complete conviction. The only argument which Mr. Wilſon employs is, that it was not the intereſt of the French to make England an enemy. If the conduct of the rulers of France had been uſually governed by the

\* “GEORGE REX.

“His Maſteſty thinks proper to acquaint the Houſe of  
“Lords, that the Aſſembly now exerciſing the powers of  
“government in France, have, without previous notice,  
“directed acts of hoſtility to be committed againſt the per-  
“ſons and property of his Maſteſty’s ſubjects, in breach of  
“the law of nations, and of the moſt poſitive ſtipulations  
“of treaty; and have ſince, on the moſt groundleſs pre-  
“tences, actually declared war againſt his Maſteſty and  
“the United Provinces. Under the circumſtances of this  
“wanton and unprovoked aggreſſion, his Maſteſty has taken  
“the neceſſary ſteps to maintain the honour of his Crown,  
“and to vindicate the rights of his people.”—

[*Extract from the King’s Meſſage delivered Feb. 11, 1793.*]

An Addreſs in the ſame words paſſed both Houſes of Parliament *without a diviſion* next day.

com-

common maxims of policy, the argument would have been plausible; but their councils have been uniformly as devoid of prudence, as their deeds of justice and humanity. Intoxicated by unbounded presumption, they have made it their boast to contend with the united forces of Europe; and have laboured (not unsuccessfully) to increase the number of their enemies\*. But if Mr. Wilson wants argument, he sufficiently abounds with bold assertions. "It is well known," says he, "that Le Brun and his associates were ready "to have renounced Brabant rather than go "to war with England†." This assertion is not only contradicted by the decree of the 15th of December, by which, "the nation "engages not to lay down its arms, till the "re-establishment of the liberty and sovereignty of the people whose territory the "French army shall enter;" and "that it "will consent to no accommodation, or "treaty, with the princes and privileged

\* "A happy fatality occasions all powers to coalesce against France, while she remains without an ally."

Extract from the *Observations of Rabaut in the Chronique de Paris*, Jan. 28, 1793.

† Page 39.



“ persons who shall be thus deprived :” and by M. Chauvelin’s Memorial \*; but still more decidedly by the decrees which unite the Low Countries to the French republic, under the name of the department of Jemappe.

Mr. Wilson, however, observes †, “ That war with England was a calamity not only deprecated by the rulers of France, but by the whole body of the people ; and that the manner in which this fierce nation humbled itself to England in negotiation, was indeed very remarkable.” M. Chauvelin’s memorials do indeed afford *extraordinary* proofs of humility ‡. The only instance in which he complied with the requisitions of the English Ministry, was in giving a promise that the territory of Holland should not be attacked, a promise of the sincerity of which all Europe can judge §. After such satisfaction

\* See M. Chauvelin’s Memorial, dated Jan. 13.

† See Mr. Wilson’s Letter, p. 35.

‡ See Remarks on Mr. Fox’s Speech at the opening of Parliament.

§ This promise was repeated in M. Chauvelin’s note on the 13th of January. At that time the French were avowedly preparing heavy artillery and stores at Liege for the siege

tion, M. Chauvelin tells Lord Grenville, in his note dated December 28th, " that it will, " in fact, be nothing but a war of the Administration alone against the French republic; and if this truth could for a moment appear doubtful, it would not, perhaps, be impossible for France speedily to convince of this a nation, which in bestowing its confidence has never renounced the exercise of its reason."

siege of Maestricht. At Antwerp they had formed a number of Dutch malcontents into a *revolutionary committee*, and embodied others into a Batavian legion. At the same time, among other inflammatory papers, a hand-bill in Dutch, addressed to the Batavian people, was profusely posted up in Amsterdam, of which the following paragraph is an extract: " But the days of tyranny are passed; *the nations are about to be delivered from the burden of kings.* Brave friends, let us revive to hope; let the love of public good unite us. Let us forget, in order to arrive at the speedy execution of our great designs, all private hatred; let us have nothing in view but the national sovereignty, the only end to which high-minded, feeling, and courageous men ought to aspire. *Let us swear anew annihilation of the Stadtholder!* Let us swear the destruction of all arbitrary power!—

" Let the immortal example of our illustrious neighbours animate the weakest, encourage the most timid! Like them, let us sacrifice all for liberty! Let us not lay down our holy arms till after glorious triumphs; *and let us exterminate those sacrilegious wretches who may dare to oppose our vast designs.*"

On

On the 13th of January he concludes thus:  
 “ his Britannic Majesty’s Ministers ought not  
 “ to have any doubts with regard to the in-  
 “ tentions of France. If her explanations  
 “ appear insufficient, and we are still obliged  
 “ to hear a haughty language; if hostile pre-  
 “ parations are continued in the English  
 “ ports, after having exhausted every means  
 “ to preserve peace, we will prepare for  
 “ war.” While this *conciliating* language  
 was held in the official correspondence of  
 the French Minister in London, M. Monge,  
 the Minister of the Marine Department, issu-  
 ed a circular letter to the maritime towns of  
 France, on the 31st of December, which de-  
 serves to be inserted at length :

“ The Government of England is arm-  
 “ ing, and the King of Spain, encouraged  
 “ by it, is preparing to attack us. These  
 “ two *tyrannical* powers, after *persecuting*  
 “ *the patriots* on their own territories, think,  
 “ no doubt, to influence the judgement of  
 “ the traitor Louis. They hope to frighten  
 “ us; but no, the people which has made  
 “ itself free, the people which has driven,  
 “ from the heart of France to the distant  
 “ bank



“ banks of the Rhine, the formidable army  
 “ of the Prussians and Austrians, the French  
 “ people will not suffer laws to be dictated  
 “ to it by any *tyrant*.

“ The King and *his* Parliament mean to  
 “ make war upon us. Will the *English* re-  
 “ publicans suffer it? Already these free men  
 “ shew their discontent, and the repugnance  
 “ they have to bear arms against their bre-  
 “ thren the French. Well, we will fly to  
 “ their aid, we will make a descent upon  
 “ that island, we will pour in 50,000 caps  
 “ of liberty, we will plant there the sacred  
 “ tree, and we will stretch out our arms to  
 “ our republican brethren. The *tyranny* of  
 “ their *Government* will be quickly de-  
 “ stroyed. Let every one of us be strongly  
 “ impressed with this idea.

“ MONGE.”

This letter, which it is impossible to con-  
 sider in any other light than as a declaration  
 of hostilities, was followed by measures still  
 more decisive. On the 28th of January an  
 order was issued by the Executive Council  
 to seize all English and Dutch ships in the  
 ports

ports of France ; orders were likewise sent to the French frigates and cruizers to attack them at sea. On the 31st of January the National Convention decreed, that letters of marque should be granted to privateers ; and on the 1st of February decreed a declaration of war against Great Britain and the United Provinces. The vessels stopt in the French ports, to the number (by their accounts) of 120 sail, have since been confiscated and sold, in direct violation of the Commercial Treaty \*, concluded in 1786, in which it is stipulated, “ that in case of a rupture between the crowns, their subjects should “ be allowed to continue and trade without “ molestation ;” or, that if the Government thought it necessary to order them to remove, the term of twelve months should be allowed them to carry off their property. And even though the Commercial Treaty should not be considered as binding, such a proceeding was a manifest violation of the law of nations †, and of the constant practice of civilized

\* See the Commercial Tréaty, Art. II. in Mr. Chalmers's Collection, Vol. I. p. 519.

† Le Souverain qui declare le guerre, ne peut retenir les sujets de l'ennemi, qui se trouvent dans ses Etats, au moment

lized countries; however it may be reconciled to the refined philanthropy of the philosophers of France.

It may, however, be said, that though the French were the *actual*, our Government were the *virtual* aggressors in the war; and *this* Mr. Wilson takes for granted throughout, without even making an attempt to prove it; though nothing is more certain, than that the nation which begins hostilities is to be considered as the aggressor, unless it can shew that its conduct was justified by inevitable necessity. To give Mr. Wilson's cause every possible advantage, we will therefore examine the reasons by which the French justify their declaration of war, especially as Mr. Fox\* contends, that some of those reasons were well founded,

ment de la declaration; non plus que leurs effets. Ils sont venus chez lui, sur la foi publique: en leur premettant d'entrer dans ses Etats, & d'y séjourner, il leur a promis tacitement toute liberté & toute sûreté pour le retour.

Vattel, Lib. III. c. iv. § 63.

\* See Mr. Fox's Speech on the War, p. 21 & 22.

C

I shall



I shall not insert the whole of a long declamatory paper, but shortly mention each article, and attend chiefly to such as Mr. Fox thinks of weight.

I. A general charge, that the King of England had given proofs of ill-will to the French nation.—A general charge admits of no other answer than a general denial, and is best explained by the subsequent detail of particulars.

II. That the English ambassador was recalled from Paris, after the 10th of August, 1792.—It must be remembered, that the recall of Lord Gower was so far from implying a hostile disposition in our Court, that it was accompanied by an express declaration of its resolution to remain in amity with the French. Of this I shall say no more, as Mr. Fox, who has often blamed the recall as impolitic, does not attempt to support it as ground for a declaration of war.

III. That at the same time the English Cabinet ceased to correspond with the French Minister

Minister at London.—To this the same answer applies.

IV. That it did not recognise the power of the National Convention, or receive its ambassador.—To this it may be answered, that neither did it receive an ambassador from the princes who claimed the government of France, or make any acknowledgement of their right; but professed its resolution to avoid all interference; and preserve a general friendship towards the French nation.

V. That it prevented the exportation of grain, arms, and other merchandizes, to France.—It is not true that any merchandizes, except grain, were stopped, till the conduct of the French gave reason to expect an immediate declaration of war; after which, it would have been madness in our Government to suffer them to be supplied with military or naval stores.

Mr. Fox lays great stress on the prevention of the exportation of corn, as an act of hostility, for which no good reason has, he says, been given. When the exportation

was stopped, there was but too much cause to apprehend a rupture ; and on this ground the measure might be justified. But another reason rendered it unavoidably necessary. The French government, who possessed an unlimited paper credit, were entirely careless of the amount of their expences ; and knowing that there were no means of gratifying the turbulent populace, who are their masters, so efficacious as the importation of an immense quantity of grain, had employed agents to purchase it, in every market, and at any price.

That government, which had spent above twenty millions sterling upon the cleathing of their army for one campaign, would not have scrupled to employ an equal, or even a greater sum, to satisfy the clamours of the people, who in many parts of France really suffered distress, and in all apprehended it. It was therefore clear, that, unless the exportation were prohibited, the whole harvest of England might be transferred to France\*.

A large

\* The ordinary produce of wheat, in England, is probably not more than ten or eleven millions of quarters, and



A large quantity of corn was actually sent, and the price began to rise rapidly; surely then it was wise in our Government to interfere, before so much had been removed as to produce a scarcity, or occasion discontent.

VI. That the circulation of assignats, in England, was prohibited by Act of Parliament.—This is perhaps the first time that an internal regulation of trade has been ever made the ground of a declaration of war. Mr. Fox owns that it is absurd; but observes, that the act seemed intended only to exasperate the French. Mr. Fox cannot but know that attempts were really made to introduce assignats into circulation in England; and will he contend that, in order to avoid exasperating the French, we ought to have made ourselves partners in their bankruptcy?

VII. That, in violation of the fourth article of the Commercial Treaty, an Act was passed which subjected French citizens, in England, to the most inquisitorial forms.—

is frequently sold for much less than twenty millions sterling, but it is impossible to guess to what the price might have risen if the exportation had continued.

The

The Commercial Treaty certainly could not be intended to deprive either power of the right of internal legislation, in circumstances which then could not be foreseen\*; and the French had exercised this right in so extraordinary a manner, as rendered some exertions of it on our part absolutely necessary. This right is, indeed, expressly stated at the close of the very article quoted in the declaration †. But if the requiring passports and the other regulations of the Alien Bill are

\* S'il est certain et manifeste, que la consideration de l'état present est entrée dans la raison qui a donné lieu à la promesse, que la promesse a été faite en consideration, en conséquence de cet état des choses, elle depend de la conservation des choses dans le même état.

*Vattel*, Lib. III. c. xvii. §. 296.

† The subjects and inhabitants of the respective dominions of the two sovereigns shall have liberty *freely and securely*, without licence or passport, general or special, by land or by sea, or in any other way, to enter into the kingdoms, &c. of either sovereign, situated in Europe, and to return from thence, to remain there, or to pass through the same, and therein to buy and purchase, as they please, all things necessary for their subsistence and use, and they shall be mutually treated with kindness and favour. Provided however, that, in all these matters, they behave and conduct themselves *conformably to the laws and statutes*, and live with each other in a friendly and peaceable manner, and promote reciprocal concord, by maintaining a mutual good understanding. *Commercial Treaty*, Art. IV.

con-

contrary to the Commercial Treaty, the French were themselves the first violators of it, by subjecting English travellers to treatment infinitely more vexatious and inconvenient. It is however more probable, this pretended breach of treaty was only alledged as an excuse for their shameful confiscation of the English ships seized in their ports before the declaration of war.

VIII. That the English Government had protected the French emigrants, and assisted them with money. — This requires no answer, as it is well known that the emigrants received no assistance in England for any hostile preparations.

IX. That it had augmented its forces by sea and land. — It would otherwise have been at the mercy of the French, who had not only immense armies on foot, but a considerable fleet ready for sea, before the English Government began to arm.

X. That it persecuted bitterly those who maintained in England the principles of the French revolution. — This article is truly curious,



rious, as by it the French not only admit that to *propagate sedition* is to *maintain their principles*, but avow their resolution to *interfere in the domestic government of independent nations*.

XI. That it sent a Squadron to the Scheldt, to trouble the operations of the French in Belgium.—This is true, if *one* of the operations of the French was to violate the rights, and invade the territories of our allies.

XII. That on the news of the execution of Louis, the French ambassador was ordered to quit Great Britain.—When the King of France was no more, M. de Chauvelin, who had only been received as *his* minister, became a mere individual; and his *conduct* was generally thought to be *such* as made him a fit object for the operations of the Alien Bill.

XIII. That the King of England shewed his attachment to the cause of that *traitor* (Louis) by augmenting his forces at the time of his death.—At the time of the execution of the King of France, not much prospect remained

mained, of preserving peace, and the news of that event, which had been so earnestly deprecated in Parliament, as well as the whole nation of England, could not but shew how little the rulers of the French valued our friendship or dreaded our indignation.

XIV. That he concluded a treaty with the Emperor, hostile to France, in the month of January.—The existence of this treaty has never appeared, and was positively denied by Lord Grenville; and it will be shewn, in the course of the following pages, that treaties first brought to light by the Jacobins of Paris are not always entitled to implicit credit.

XV. That he drew into similar measures the Stadtholder of the United Provinces.—If the measures above mentioned were justifiable in the English Government, they were equally so in the United States; and surely the French, who had been contriving their subjugation, could not very reasonably complain that their allies should put them on their guard.

These are the reasons for which those rulers of France, whom Mr. Wilson describes as most earnestly desirous of peace, thought proper to commence war; but it may not be amiss to attend to some other declarations of their sentiments.

Among these friendly rulers we may particularly expect to find Messrs. Brissot and Condorcet,\* men then high in consequence and power, and the boasted friends of English statesmen.† It is necessary just to remark an artifice always employed by the French, who, when they revile our government, never fail to speak in the most respectful manner of the *nation*. I will not insult Mr. Wilson by supposing him the dupe of this absurd and insidious distinction; but shall treat (as our constitution requires) hostility to the government, as enmity to the nation.

\* M. Brissot drew up a justification of the proceedings of the 10th of August, 1792, addressed to all nations: and M. Condorcet wrote a parallel between those proceedings and the English Revolution of 1688, addressed to the English nation.

† See the Speeches of Lords Stanhope and Lauderdale.



So early as the 20th of October, 1791, M. Brissot took occasion to observe, in a speech upon the emigration from France, that "the people of England love your revolution, the government hates it."—On the 9th of July, 1792, he informed the National Assembly, "that it was to be feared, that England, having made an advantageous peace in India, would turn its views towards France." On the 20th of November he made a report to the National Convention on the affairs of Geneva, in which he observes, that the Crown of England had interfered in favour of the aristocrats of that city.—"Without doubt it will one day rouse the indignation of the English nation, to learn that its influence has been employed to protect the aristocracy of some designing leaders, and to crush free men; without doubt it will call to account those who have abused its name. But whatever may happen, the French Republic will not give way. The intervention of a king has nothing which can alarm it."—The conclusion of this report is a curious specimen of political morality—"Doubtless we shall examine whether a free

“ people can, and ought to bind itself by  
 “ treaties: whether they are not useless  
 “ with republics, which the same common  
 “ principles ought to unite; and indecent  
 “ with every government which does not  
 “ hold its powers of the people: for, per-  
 “ haps, that is the secret of your revolution,  
 “ and of those *which are preparing*. You  
 “ have succeeded, you will succeed, because  
 “ the people, the individuals, are for you.  
 “ Treat with tyrants, you are no more for  
 “ them than an ordinary government; the  
 “ enthusiasm of the people ceases with your  
 “ glory and your success.”—On the 12th of  
 January, 1793, he made a report on the dis-  
 position of the British government, in which  
 he observes, “ These Ministers (the English)  
 “ foresaw that this republic might consolidate  
 “ itself, and carry the torch of revolution  
 “ throughout all Europe.

“ Thus not only did the English Minister  
 “ disdain to send us an ambassador, but he  
 “ refused to acknowledge ours. Perhaps  
 “ the French republic should examine in its  
 “ turn, whether it ought to acknowledge  
 “ those

“ those kings who treat with so much insolence a powerful republic.

“ Well, we must frustrate the plans of the English Cabinet as we have done those of Leopold and Frederick-William; we must force them to give us a precise explanation which may set us at rest for ever, or draw the sword against the English; and believe the Genius of Liberty, the French seamen, will not yield to the conquerors of Brabant, and the sea will also have its Jemappe.

“ Here we must tear the veil which covers this mighty Colossus of England; here we must prove that you will begin this maritime war with greater advantages than the Cabinet of St. James's.”

The sentiments of M. Condorcet are very similar. “ Holland,” he observes, in the *Chronique de Paris*, “ notwithstanding the Stadtholder, will be hurried into the republican vortex; perhaps England will also.” But to indemnify England for the loss of her influence over Holland, and the English



English commerce, for the opening of the Scheldt, he proposes that France and England should share the American colonies of Spain, *which was likewise a neutral country*. In a succeeding paper his sentiments are less amicable: "Let her (says he of England) spin out her intrigue; the moment of our power is fast approaching; and then the Minister who now hates, and affects to despise us, will court our alliance; and the State which employs Machiavelian policy to enrich itself, may be caught in its own snares.

"The conquest of Sardinia will be another step towards *universal Republicanism*.

"We must make Spain tremble; let ten French ships of war be sent to carry the three-coloured cockade and the declaration of the Rights of Man into Catalonia."

Observing upon one of the English addresses to the National Convention, he says\*,

\* Chronique de Paris, Nov. 23, 1792.

"the

“ the opening of the Sessions of Parliament  
 “ which approaches, will infallibly become  
 “ the occasion of the reforms which are the  
 “ most urgent; such as those which regard  
 “ the National Representation—from thence  
 “ to the entire establishment of a Republic,  
 “ the transition will be less tedious, because  
 “ the foundations of liberty have long existed  
 “ in England.”

He afterwards remarks on the declaration  
 of war,\* “ that if any have contributed  
 “ voluntarily and by a connected system of  
 “ political perfidy to the death of Louis, it  
 “ is that English Court which pretends to  
 “ lament it.”

To these instances of the sentiments of  
 those distinguished characters, who, perhaps,  
 had it more in their power than any other  
 men in France to prevent the war, it would  
 be easy to add many others, as well as the  
 declarations of other leaders of the French  
 Republic; nor is the authority of such  
 instances lessened by some of them being

\* Chronique de Paris, Feb. 3, 1793. †

extracts from newspapers. Even in England the newspapers are generally supposed to express the sentiments of the party whose cause they favour; but in France, where they are avowedly the composition of the Rulers of the State, of the Chiefs of that Convention which concentrates every power of government, they acquire a far greater *importance*, though not more *veracity*.

But Mr. Fox and his friends, conscious, perhaps, that it might be somewhat difficult to persuade this nation that it had attacked France, are particularly fond of enlarging on the unjust aggression of the German Powers.\* “The treaty of Pillnitz,” says Mr. Fox, “contained a stipulation, that “ whenever a fit occasion offered, such powers “ were to invade France—The treaty there- “ fore was the act of aggression.”

Says Mr. Wilson,† “It is well known “ that the treaty of Pillnitz was the source

\* See Mr. Fox’s speech on the King’s message relative to the execution of the French King, p. 5.

† See Mr. Wilson’s letter, p. 36.

“ of



“ of all the present hostilities. At the time  
 “ that this took place, the constitution of  
 “ France was settled, the King and the  
 “ People had sworn to obey it; there was in  
 “ it a good deal to praise, and much to  
 “ blame; but, for reasons which it would  
 “ be useless to detail, it was on the whole  
 “ *impracticable*.” This defect seems to me  
 to render all further criticism unnecessary.  
 Mr. Wilson, however, goes on with an ex-  
 amination in which, for that reason, I shall not  
 follow him. On the subject of the confede-  
 racy, he assumes both the authority and the  
 obscurity of a prophet :\* “ What consum-  
 “ mates our misfortunes is, that if, by our  
 “ assistance, the confederates should succeed  
 “ in their views, England will be blotted out  
 “ of the system of Europe; Holland cannot  
 “ preserve its independence a single day; a  
 “ connected chain of despotism will extend  
 “ over the fairest portion of the earth, and  
 “ the lamp of liberty that has blazed so bright  
 “ in our sea-girt isle, must be extinguished  
 “ in the universal night.”

\* See Mr. Wilson's letter, p. 54.

At this doleful prediction I confess I am not much alarmed, because I have not the sagacity to discover how it is to be accomplished. Mr. Wilson finds *other* ground for comfort in the profound reflection, that the combined armies (whom he civilly calls innocent and ignorant slaves\*) are *men*; that “ they may *perish* by the *sword*, by *fatigue*, “ by *famine*, and by *disease*; and that the *new* “ *Alarics* who employ them are men also, “ weak, ignorant, and mortal, like the rest: “ Death will soon level them with the instruments of their guilty ambition.” Of this *humane* and *patriotic* hope I leave him all the consolation.

It would be sufficient to observe, that our Government having been forced into the war by an unjust attack, only followed the common rules of prudence, in availing itself of the assistance of those powers who were, from *whatever* motives, engaged in opposition to the same enemy; for I apprehend Mr. Wilson’s doctrine will gain few converts,† “ that it had been far better for

\* See Mr. Wilson’s letter, p. 55.

† See Mr. Wilson’s letter, p. 25.

“ Bri-

“ Britain to have fought France singly, if her  
 “ power had been twice as great, while the  
 “ rest of Europe looked on.”

But it may not be amiss, by a short deduction of facts, to shew how far Mr. Fox and Mr. Wilson are accurate in the statement I have quoted.

On the night of the 20th of June, 1791, the late King of France and his family escaped from the palace of the Thuilleries, where they had been guarded ever since the 6th of October, 1789. On the 25th the King, Queen, their children, and Madam Elizabeth, the King's sister, were brought back prisoners to Paris, and kept in close confinement till the 4th of September. On the 28th of July, the National Assembly, apprehensive that foreign powers might resent the imprisonment of the Royal Family, and knowing that several German Princes had complained, to the Emperor, of the violation of rights secured to them by the treaty of Westphalia, ordered an addition to their army of 97,000 men. On the 14th of September, the King accepted the constitution.



On the 24th of August, the Emperor Leopold, the King of Prussia, and the Elector of Saxony, met at the castle of Pillnitz, in Lusatia, belonging to the Elector, where they remained till the 28th. The subject of their conference was kept secret; but on the 27th, (seven days before the Royal Family of France were *apparently* liberated at Paris, and *seventeen before the acceptance of the constitution*) the Emperor delivered the following declaration to the Comte d'Artois :

“ His Majesty the Emperor, and his  
 “ Majesty the King of Prussia, having heard  
 “ the desires and representations of Monsieur,  
 “ and of his Royal Highness the Comte  
 “ d'Artois, declare jointly that they regard  
 “ the situation in which his Majesty the  
 “ King of France *actually* is, as an object of  
 “ common interest to all the sovereigns of  
 “ Europe. They hope that this concern  
 “ cannot fail to be acknowledged by the  
 “ powers whose assistance is claimed, and  
 “ that in consequence they will not refuse  
 “ to employ, jointly with their said Majesties,  
 “ the most efficacious means, in proportion  
 “ to their forces, to place the King of France  
 “ in

“ in a state to settle, in the most perfect liberty, the foundations of a monarchical government, equally suitable to the rights of sovereigns and the welfare of the French. Then, and in that case, their said Majesties are decided to act quickly, and with one accord, with the forces necessary to obtain the common end proposed. In the meantime they will give suitable orders to their troops, that they may be ready to put themselves in motion.

“ At Pillnitz, August 27.

“ Signed by the Emperor and  
“ the King of Prussia.”

This declaration evidently refers to the imprisonment and personal danger of the Royal Family of France; and was so explained by an official note from Prince Kaunitz to the Austrian ministers resident in foreign courts, dated Vienna, Nov. 1, 1791.

“ SIR,

“ The *state of detention* in which the King and Royal Family of France were, having ceased, the Emperor has made no difficulty to grant the Ambassador of France at  
“ this

“ this court, the audience which he requested  
 “ of him at his return from Prague.

“ When the Emperor proposed a common  
 “ declaration and measures to hinder the fa-  
 “ tal effects of the French revolution, immi-  
 “ nent dangers threatened the liberty, honour,  
 “ and safety of the King and Royal Family ;  
 “ as well as the preservation of monarchical  
 “ government in France, attacked in its es-  
 “ sential principles, by the progress of a po-  
 “ pular anarchy, which became dangerous for  
 “ all the governments of Europe.

“ These dangers are no longer immediate ;  
 “ the last events give hopes for the future.”

In the Brussels Gazette of the 22d of Sep-  
 tember it was announced, by authority,  
 “ that the circumstances which had taken  
 “ place with regard to the declaration of  
 “ Pillnitz, gave occasion to consider it as not  
 “ having taken place.” These pacific explana-  
 tions are sufficiently confirmed by the total  
 inaction of the Austrian and Prussian armies.  
 Not a single regiment quitted its ordinary  
 cantonments ; and the King of Prussia even  
 ordered



ordered the horses to be sold, which had been collected in the summer for the service of the heavy artillery, under the apprehension of a rupture with Russia. The Emperor had particular reasons to wish for peace, as his finances were exhausted by the Turkish war, and the Netherlands, which had been very lately recovered to his authority, were still in a state of some commotion. That the efforts of the French patriots were not wanting to excite more dangerous disturbances, appears, among other proofs, by the following letter from the friends of the constitution at Maubeuge to the patriots of Brabant, dated Sept. 18, 1791.

“ Gentlemen Patriots,

“ You know how to value liberty ; you de-  
 “ fired it, and unhappy events have depri-  
 “ ved you of the conquest of it. *The friends*  
 “ *of the French constitution embrace the whole*  
 “ *world in their system of philanthropy, and*  
 “ on this account, Gentlemen, they hope  
 “ that in returning into your country, you  
 “ will sow in it *the seeds of our beneficent*  
 “ *projects, that they may produce an abun-*  
 “ *dant harvest.*

(Signed) “ ROCHAMBEAU, President.”

This

This letter was profusely circulated throughout the Netherlands.

No sooner had a free passage out of France been permitted, in consequence of the King's acceptance of the constitution, than an incredible number of persons, especially of the noble families, quitted the kingdom. The greater part of them had no other design than to escape from a country where their persons and property had been in continual danger during two years of anarchy. But among them were a multitude of military and naval officers, who proposed to form an army, under the command of the brothers of the King of France, for the invasion of that country. These emigrations soon attracted the notice of the National Assembly, which had met on the 3d of October, and the chiefs of the Jacobin party (Messrs. Brissot, Condorcet, and the deputies of the department of La Gironde \*) distinguished themselves by their declamations against the emigrants, and the severity of the measures they proposed. In these speeches were always mingled the most vio-

\* Especially M. M. Vergniaud, and Guadet.

lent invectives against the Emperor, as the protector of the emigrants\*, though it is well known that they were dispersed and disarmed in all the Austrian dominions†. It was evidently the intention of the Jacobins, under this pretence, to occasion a war. They might with greater reason have complained of the conduct of the ‡ Empress of Russia and the King of Sweden, who had not only declared their intention of assisting the French Princes, but had refused to acknowledge the validity of the King's acceptance of the constitution.

But a rupture with those powers would not have answered the purposes of the Jacobin leaders, which were, the conquest of Brabant, and the destruction of their own King,

\* See M. Brissot's speech on the 22d of October, 1791, and several of his subsequent speeches, as well as those of Condorcet, Isnard, &c. and that of Anacharsis Cloots on the 13th of December. On the 24th of October one Huré made an offer (which was received with great applause) of 100 livres towards the expence of the war, and his aim to be a *tyrannicide*.

† See the report read to the Assembly, October 31, by M. Montmorin, the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

‡ See the declaration delivered to Prince Kaunitz, November 30, 1791, by the Swedish Ambassador, in the name of his master and the Empress.



by accusing him of a secret concert with the enemies of the nation. The first of those purposes they made no scruple of avowing in their usual phrase of extending liberty; the second it was not then safe to acknowledge. But the time afterwards came when secrecy was no longer necessary. On the 25th of September 1792, Barbaroux observed, " Our constituents have charged us to oppose caballers and dictators, on whichever side they may be found. See with what rage each of them distils his calumny; they accuse you already for having declared war. The war, Citizens! It was undertaken for the most just of causes, for that of liberty; *it has killed Louis the Sixteenth* \*."

The violence of the Jacobins was so successful, that on the 14th of December 1791, orders were given to assemble three armies, amounting to 150,000 men, on the frontiers; and on the 28th M. Brissot assured the Assembly, that " war was actually a *national benefit*, and that the only calamity which " was to be feared was *not to have war*."—

\* *It was the abolition of Royalty which I had in view in causing war to be declared.*—Brissot a tous les Republicains Paris October 24, 1792. 2d edit. p. 8.

It

It however happened that the Elector of Treves (who was the only Prince that had suffered military preparations to be made in his dominions) was alarmed at these formidable preparations, and obliged the emigrants to disperse\*. This deprived the French of their pretence for a rupture; yet they did not relax in their preparations, and the vehemence of their orators became even greater than before. The National Assembly voted that their army should be increased to the number of 420,000 men; a force sufficiently alarming to the neighbouring states, and sufficiently burthenfome to their own finances†. In February, about 14,000 Hessian and Austrian troops assembled, to form a cordon in

\* “ On the 17th of December a National Guard of the frontiers was arrested at Worms, disguised as a Knight of Malta, and associated with 40 other persons, of whom several are also taken, and who on the 18th were to execute the plot of assassinating the Prince de Condé: on the first examination they confessed the crime and its author.—We warrant the certainty of this intelligence.”

*Mercure de France, Dec. 1791, p. 359.*

† “ Louis the XIVth maintained for some time an army of 450,000 men, but it was a violent effort, and that effort has ruined France.”

*Voltaire's Remarks on History.*

the Palatinate and upon the Rhine, and 30,000 Austrians were ordered to be in readiness to march. Though these preparations were merely defensive, and only 6000 of the Austrian troops actually marched, they were magnified, by the newspapers, into a tremendous armament for the purpose of restoring despotism in France.

At the same time two treaties were published\*, one pretended to have been signed at Pavia in the month of July 1791, and the other at Vienna, February 18, 1792. The first contains a plan for the partition of France and Poland, and various encroachments upon Turkey and other states. It is signed by the Emperor Leopold, and the Ministers of Russia, Spain, and Prussia. To this it is said that England acceded in March 1792, and Holland soon after—circumstances so evidently false, as to render the whole story utterly unworthy of refutation. It seems, indeed, never to have obtained any credit even among those who were most disposed to think unfavourably of the Emperor's conduct with regard to France.

\* See this treaty in the Political State of Europe, a publication notoriously Jacobin, vol. ii. p. 751.



\* The other treaty appears to be what Mr. Fox has quoted as that of Pillnitz, as it contains

\* The following treaty was really concluded between the Emperor and the King of Prussia at Berlin, February 7, 1792; but as it was merely defensive, it did not answer the purpose of the Jacobins.

“ Art. I. contains general professions of amity.

“ Art. II. confirms all former treaties, particularly those of Breslaw, Dresden, Hubertsburgh, and Teschen.

“ Art. III. His Majesty the Emperor and his Majesty the King of Prussia promise and engage, for themselves and their heirs, to guarantee and defend all the states, provinces, and hereditary dominions which they actually possess on both sides, against the attacks of any power whatsoever.

“ Art. IV. In consequence of this reciprocal guarantee, the two high contracting parties will labour, jointly, for the maintenance of peace; they will employ, in case the states of either of them should be threatened with an invasion, their most efficacious good offices to prevent it. But if these good offices should not have the desired effect, and that either of them should be really attacked, they oblige themselves in this case mutually to assist each other with a body of 15,000 foot and 5,000 horse.

“ Art. V. regulates the mode of giving this assistance, which it is stipulated shall begin to march in two months after the requisition shall be made.

“ Art. VI. In case the stipulated succours should not be sufficient for the defence of the requiring power, the power which is required shall successively increase them, according to the necessity of his ally, and the circumstances of the agreement they shall then make.

“ Art.

tains a stipulation that the forces of the contracting powers shall march *as soon as the season will permit*, which approaches nearly to his expression. It professes to be concluded between the Emperor and the King of Prussia, who agree to invade France with 180,000 men, to restore to the Crown all the rights and prerogatives which belong to it, and to hold a congress to determine what those rights and prerogatives shall be. It is unnecessary to criticise this nonsense, as the treaty bears evident marks of forgery on the face of it. It is dated at Vienna the 18th of February, and signed by the Comte de Colleredo and the Baron de Bischofswerder. Now M. de Bis-

“ Art. VII. To attain completely the salutary views  
 “ that the two high contracting powers propose to them-  
 “ selves in their treaty, they reserve to themselves the  
 “ right of jointly inviting the imperial court of Russia,  
 “ the two maritime powers, and the Elector of Saxony,  
 “ to unite themselves mutually with them, by similar en-  
 “ gagements and stipulations.

“ Art. VIII. They engage to preserve the Germanic  
 “ constitution as settled by laws and treaties.

“ Art. IX. They engage to contract no other alliance  
 “ unknown to each other.”

In consequence of this treaty, the King of Prussia marched to the assistance of the Emperor when his dominions were attacked.

chofswerder

chowsverder (who is a Comte, and not a Baron) had not left Berlin the 18th of February, and did not arrive at Vienna till the 28th, and there was at that time no Comte Colloredo at all in the Austrian ministry.

It would be paying an unmerited compliment to the Jacobins to suppose them incapable of fabricating these treaties to answer the purposes of their party, especially as they had recourse, at the same time, to other means at least equally reprehensible. In the beginning of February \* 60,000 pikes were made at Paris, with which the vilest of the populace were armed. By whom, and for what purposes they were collected, sufficiently appears from M. Brissot's account, printed the 13th:

“ Where will these pikes present themselves?  
 “ Wherever you may be, enemies of the  
 “ people.—Will they dare to present them-  
 “ selves at the Castle of the Thuilleries †?

\* “ Chaque pique est ornée de crochets; afin disent les amateurs, de pouvoir plus efficacement arracher les entraîles.” *Mercur de France, Feb. 1792, p. 214.*

† By this it appears, with what justice the attack of the Thuilleries, on the 10th of August, has been ascribed to an unpremeditated riot.

“ Yes,



“ Yes, without doubt, if you are there !—  
 “ Who will order these pikes?—Necessity.—  
 “ Who will distribute them?—Patriotism.—  
 “ The pikes have begun the revolution, the  
 “ pikes will complete it.” The declarations  
 of these pikemen themselves were equally in-  
 telligible. A numerous deputation of them  
 informed the National Assembly, that “ they  
 “ had armed themselves to *purge the earth*  
 “ *of the King's friends*, and to superintend  
 “ the executive power.” On the 6th of  
 March, another deputation of them, under  
 the name of men of the 14th of July, ad-  
 dressed the Assembly in a long harangue.  
 Among other things, they said, “ The  
 “ sponge of ages may wipe from the book of  
 “ the law the chapter of royalty—Courtiers,  
 “ Kings, Ministers, the civil list, will pass  
 “ away ; but the rights of man, the national  
 “ sovereignty and pikes, will never pass  
 “ away.” This address was received with  
 distinguished honours. By means such as  
 these, and by the impeachment of two of his  
 Ministers (M. de Montmorin and M. de Les-  
 sart, both of whom were afterwards basely  
 and barbarously murdered) the King was  
 compelled

compelled towards the end of March to form a Jacobin administration.

In the mean time (on the 1st of March) the Emperor Leopold died, after an illness so short and violent, as to afford no small probability to the suspicion of poison, leaving behind him the reputation of a mild, equitable, and pacific prince, sincerely desirous of the happiness of his subjects, and not unskilful in his endeavours to promote it, but somewhat dilatory and indecisive in his resolutions, and too busily attentive to minute regulations. The Jacobins rejoiced extravagantly at his death, from an absurd idea, that the empire would be an easy prey during the interregnum. They were soon afterwards (March 16th) delivered from a more dangerous enemy by the assassination of the King of Sweden, Gustavus the Third, whose restless and enterprising spirit, and unconquerable courage, would probably have urged him to put himself at the head of the French nobility, of whose cause he was the avowed protector.

The new Minister for foreign affairs (Dumourier) lost no time in making such requi-

sitions to the young King of Hungary as it was impossible for him to comply with \*. These being refused or evaded by the Austrian Ministry, the King of France was obliged, by his council, on the 20th of April, to come down to the National Assembly and propose a declaration of war, which was immediately and gladly voted †. To withstand the numerous armies of France, about 55,000 Austrian troops were dispersed through the whole extent of the Netherlands, a country by no means satisfied with their government, and undefended by any fortress, except Luxembourg and the Castle of Namur ‡. Besides these, there were 12,000 troops in Brisgaw, 10,000 Hessians on the

\* See the Appendix.

† See Remarks on Mr. Fox's speech at the opening of the Parliament.

‡ Mr. Wilson observes (page 45) that "the Netherlands were defenceless, because the Emperor Joseph dismantled *Namur, Mons, Tournay, &c.*" Mr. Wilson is unlucky in his examples, for Mons and Tournay, with several other places, were dismantled by the French, who took them in the war of 1745; and the Castle of Namur is a strong place at this day. It is not true that the Emperor Joseph destroyed the fortifications of any place of real strength.



Lower Rhine, and 8,000 or 9,000 Prussians about Wesel \*. Such had been the preparations of the German powers when the French troops entered the Austrian Netherlands on the 28th of April. Their behaviour afterwards is but too well remembered; and I will not repeat a tale which disgraces human nature.

Such was the conduct of the French towards the Emperor; and by similar means Sardinia, Spain, and Holland were forced into the war. The Jacobins were completely triumphant, and employed, to extend the violence of open hostility, and the miseries of civil commotion in other countries, whatever moments they could spare from persecution, ravage, and massacre in their own desolated land. Unawed by power, untamed by moderation, unappeased by inoffensive weakness, they at once crushed the little republic of Geneva, and undermined with secret perfidy the constitution of England. Disappointed in their insidious attempts to excite

\* During the whole campaign the Austrians were not able to bring into the field a body of more than 20,000 men in the Low Countries.

sedition in this country, they are now aiming by open war at the destruction of a nation, whose only crime was, to have been attentive to the preservation of its own happiness, and to have received with a pitying heart and liberal hand the victims of their cruelty.

Having examined the first position on which Mr. Wilson's reasoning is founded, that our government entered wantonly and without necessity into the war, I shall now consider whether, as he asserts, the distress of our commerce has been owing to it. I am aware that assertions of this general nature are seldom *wholly true or completely false*; and though Mr. Wilson pretends to give his reasoning the force of demonstration \*, I shall be contented to ground mine on probabilities only. I am likewise aware, that to ascribe *any* calamity to the war, is a mode of reasoning which will always be popular, because it is short and obvious; it requires little memory to retain, and no previous knowledge to comprehend it. For it must be observed, that the question, *how* the war occasioned any calamity? is seldom asked, because that might require the

\* See Mr. Wilson's Letter, p. 19.

trouble of a long investigation: Mr. Wilson has, however, undertaken to answer it; and on his answer I shall bestow some attention, since, if it turns out to be false, the position itself may probably be overturned; in which case faction will be deprived of a very dangerous weapon; and, if true, it cannot be too soon, or too seriously considered by the government. It is not very easy to state Mr. Wilson's reasons separately and distinctly, as he blends them so much together, and so frequently resumes the same in a different form. Four, however, may be collected. First, that the war on the continent, before we were engaged in it, had occasioned "a decline in the export of our manufactures, and the efflux, as it should seem, of the precious metals\*." Though this could not be the effect of *our* engaging in the war, and therefore is inconsistent with Mr. Wilson's general assertions, that that measure is the sole occasion of our calamities, yet it may be proper to take notice of it in this place, that none of his arguments may appear to be overlooked.

\* See Mr. Wilson's Letter, p. 13.

I am



I am very far from denying the truth of Mr. Wilfon's general theory, that it is the interest of a manufacturing country that its customers should be peaceful, rich, and flourishing, as they will in that case purchase its productions more liberally. But that theory is introduced *unfortunately*, as it is directly contrary to the fact, that any decline took place in the export of our manufactures. The British manufactures exported

in 1789 amounted to	£.13,779,000
in 1792	to 18,310,000*

The efflux of the precious metals, if real, must have been either as *merchandize*, or in consequence of an *unfavourable balance of trade*. If they were exported as *merchandize*, it is clear, first, that they were paid for by an equivalent value; and next, that they were unnecessary for internal circulation, which will always retain as much of them as is required for a medium of trade. Was

\* These statements, taken from the Custom House books, are probably not very accurate; but they afford a just ground of comparison, as the errors of one year are similar to those of another.

there

there then an unfavourable balance on the general amount of our foreign commerce?

In 1789 the general balance in  
favour of Great Britain was, £.1,519,000

In 1791 - - - - - 3,062,000

In 1792 - - - - - 5,449,000

But it ill becomes Mr. Wilson to complain of the exportation of our coin, as he is the zealous partizan of country banks \*, which have certainly driven it out of circulation, in a manner which no unfavourable balance of trade could ever have done;—a manner, as I shall hereafter have occasion to shew, very alarming and mischievous.

The second cause assigned by Mr. Wilson, for the commercial distress is, the discredit of bills of exchange, occasioned by the insecurity of all property on the seas, in our islands, on the coast of Africa, and other foreign possessions, in consequence of the war †. In this statement, truth is so mingled with error, that it is sufficiently difficult to distinguish them.

\* See Mr. Wilson's Letter, p. 13.

† P. 15.

which

It

It is very true that bills of exchange, and all paper circulating on the credit of individuals, have suffered to a most alarming degree. Many commercial houses have actually become bankrupt, and a still greater number have suffered a temporary derangement. The cause assigned by Mr. Wilson is likewise true (for no one will say that the property he speaks of is equally secure in time of war and peace) but is it adequate to its supposed effect? If it were, that effect must have been produced by *all* wars, in proportion to the degree of the danger. Now this is so far from being the case, that Mr. Wilson states our present calamities to be altogether *singular and unprecedented*, in degree, at least, if not in nature. Yet will it be contended that the danger to our shipping and our colonies is now greater than in the war of 1756, in which the French navy contested for three years the empire of the seas; or than in the American war, when our possessions were successively captured, and our fleet hid its diminished head in our own harbours? The comparative danger and consequent loss of value in *floating property* may be accurately estimated by the number of vessels captured,

which



which is beyond comparison less in this war than in any other which has happened in modern times, notwithstanding the extraordinary increase of navigation;—that of our colonial possessions cannot be so easily ascertained, but certainly was utterly incapable of producing the effect ascribed to it. Mr. Wilson likewise observes, that the amount of the property belonging to the British merchants and manufacturers lodged in foreign countries was much greater than on any former occasion; and this, from the great extension of our trade, I believe to be true. It is, however, clear, that though the delay of remittances might be the cause of some temporary embarrassment to those mercantile houses to whom this property belonged, it could not finally occasion any loss. I do not mean here to include the property vested in the French trade, which will be the subject of a separate investigation. It must also be remembered, that the depression of the public funds, the scarcity of cash, and the discredit of paper circulation, began long before the war, and even before the armament.

A third cause stated by Mr. Wilson as an occasion of the distress of our commerce, at the commencement of the present war is, the magnitude of the national debt, which, though no effect of the war itself, is so interwoven with it, in his discussion, that it is necessary to take notice of it here. That the magnitude of the national debt is a most weighty reason, among many others of equal importance, to avoid a state of war, no man can deny; and no man can have greater cause to be sensible of this than the present Minister, who has met with so many difficulties, and encountered so much opposition, in his endeavours to provide for its reduction. I shall presently have occasion to consider the national debt as an object of finance; I am now only to attend to it as a cause of commercial difficulties. In this view of the subject, Mr. Wilson gives me no light, and I can meet with very little elsewhere. It is often said that the national debt ruins our manufactures, by increasing the price of labour, and of raw materials, in consequence of the taxes imposed to pay the interest of it. Thus other nations, not equally burthened, are enabled to under-  
sell

fell us.\* If this is Mr. Wilson's meaning (and if he has any other, I wish he had mentioned it) the easy answer is, that whatever may become of the theory, the fact is not true: for the exportation of our manufactures has increased in an extraordinary manner since the American war, in which the national debt reached its present enormous extent.† But this debt, with all its disadvantages, appears to me in two respects to afford very essential benefit to commerce, and that, in exact proportion to its increase and magnitude. The first is obvious, it is to create a numerous class of consumers, who live upon the interest of it, and are perpetually diffusing large streams of wealth into every channel of cir-

\* See Postlethwaite and Herrenschwandt on this subject.

† British manufactures exported in 1773 £.9,417,000  
 1774 10,556,000  
 1775 10,072,000

the three last years of peace with America:

Total of three years £.30,045,000

In the three last years

1790 £.14,921,000

1791 16,810,000

1792 18,310,000

Total of three years £.50,041,000



culation. The other is to preserve a vast capital easily convertible into ready money. I cannot be supposed to mean that the *whole*, or any *large share*, of our immense funds could be so converted at once : it certainly could not find purchasers ; but it is perfectly evident, that the ordinary daily transfers are now far greater, than when the extent of the national debt was only (for instance) 50 millions. The agents of foreigners, and many wealthy men of our own nation, are perpetually watching the fluctuations of the funds, and prepared to advance large sums upon any prospect of advantage. For this reason a much larger sum of money can be raised at any time by the sale of stock : and the sale of any given quantity will produce a much smaller variation in the market price ; and in this respect I believe the difference to be much greater than is at first apparent. This facility of raising large sums instantaneously appears to me to counteract very powerfully the effects of any general stagnation of credit, or scarcity of cash. The merchant who feels himself embarrassed, either is himself a stockholder, in which case the remedy is in his own hands, or he can apply to the stockholder, and make it

it his interest to assist him. It is true he may sometimes be obliged to submit to a considerable loss; but what would be his situation if no such resource existed? The proprietors of land could give him little assistance, for it is difficult and tedious to raise money on landed security; and his mercantile connexions would probably be involved in similar difficulties with himself.

For these reasons, I am so far from thinking the National Debt was a cause of our late commercial calamities, that I have no doubt it had a very considerable effect in alleviating them.

The fourth circumstance, by which, according to Mr. Wilson, the war has occasioned the distress of our commerce, is \* “by depriving our manufacturers of the French market, of all others the most extensive; and as it had been conducted for a twelve-month past, by far the most safe and lucrative.” I have reserved this cause for the last, because it requires the longest examination.

\* See Mr. Wilson's letter, p. 16.

tion. I admit that the trade with France has long been an important object in our commerce; and that, though it had once suffered a great diminution by the late events in France, it was likely to become more extensive than ever, but of a nature totally different from what it had been before. It is likewise true, that the stoppage of so great a branch of our commerce, especially a sudden stoppage, could not but occasion a temporary derangement in the whole system, and great inconvenience to those who were particularly concerned in it. I believe it was a *cause*, though by no means the *principal* one, of the late distress; and shall have occasion to point out those which in my opinion co-operated with it.

But if it shall appear that the principles upon which this trade has been lately carried on, are such as must have proved highly detrimental to the nation at large, and finally ruinous to our commerce and manufactures, I apprehend the body of the nation will willingly acquiesce in the check it has received; though it may be impossible to reconcile those individuals to it who are the immediate losers,

and





TABLE I.

## TRADE BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE.

Exports from Great Britain.

Imports from France into Great Britain.

	England.		Scotland.		England.		Scotland.	
	£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.
In 1786	611,232	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1787	986,905	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1788	1,259,672	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1789	1,047,573	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1790	630,432	—	—	—	449,524	—	13,904	—
1791	1,131,376	—	—	—	480,311	—	15,501	—
1792	1,228,168	—	—	—	534,682	—	11,375	—
		—		—	704,980	—	12,657	—

## BRITISH MANUFACTURES AND PRODUCE EXPORTED TO FRANCE.†

ENGLISH ACCOUNT.		FRENCH ACCOUNT.	
£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.
In 1787	713,446	33,000,000	1,375,000
1788	884,100	27,000,000	1,125,000
1789	830,377	23,000,000	958,333

† From Mr. Arthur Young's Tour.

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Countries.	Manufactures.	
Great Britain.	Lace, Silk, Glafs, Perfumery, Cambrics, Lawns, Gloves, Millinery	736
Spain	Hats, Lace, Drapery, Gauzes, Ribbons, Linen, Books, Furniture	26,58
Portugal	Similar Articles	2,29
Italy and Switzerland	Similar Articles, with Jewellery, Glafs, and Soap	30,80
Holland	Cambric, Gauzes, Glafs, Furniture, Soap, Millinery	6,94
Germany and Poland	Similar Articles, with Jewellery, Perfumery, Articles of Leather, Hats	39,14
The Northern States	The like Articles	3,62
North America	Paper, Linen, Gunpowder, Glafs, Gloves	1,238
* The Levant	Light Woollens, Stuffs, Handkerchiefs,	9,318
		127,311

# TABLE II.

## EXPORTS OF FRANCE IN 1787.

Value.		Provisions.	Value.		Materials of Manufactures.	Value.	
Livres.	£. Sterling.		Livres.	£. Sterling.		Livres.	£. Sterling.
7,361,000	306,708	Grain, dried Fruits, Salt, Wines, and Brandy	19,028,000	792,833	Cotton, Indigo, Spanish Wool, Ma- hogany	11,179,000	465,791
26,582,000	1,107,583,	Corn, Vegetables, Cod, Sugar, Cinna- mon, Pepper, Wines, Brandies, Sheep, Hogs, Salt Meat	12,564,000	523,500	Pitch, Tar, Mules, Wool, Cotton, Silk, Metals, Leather	5,249,000	218,708
2,298,000	95,750	Corn, Vegetables, Hams	1,612,000	67,166	Cotton re-exported	85,000	3,541
30,805,000	1,283,54	Cod, Wheat, Rye, Sugar, Cattle, Oil, Wines and Brandies, Coffee	35,723,000	1,488,458	Copper, Lead, Cot- ton-wool, Spun Cot- ton, Drying Woods, Vitriol, Gum, Salt- petre, Indigo	11,815,000	492,291
6,943,000	289,291	Coffee, Sugar, Corn, Honey, Rice, Dried Plums, Wines, Bran- dies	31,824,000	1,326,000	Linseed, Juniper, Hops, Leaf Tobacco, Gum, Cochineal, Gall-nut, Ocre, Tur- pentine	7,126,000	296,916
39,146,000	1,631,083	Coffee, Sugar, Oil, Cheese, Dry Fruits, Salt, Wines, Bran- dies, Cattle	43,575,000	1,815,625	Garden Seeds, Coal, Stone, Slate, Wool, Cotton, Silk, Flints, Metals, Leather	12,893,000	537,208
3,620,000	150,833	Coffee, Sugar, Oil, Dry Fruits, Salt, Al- monds, Wines, Bran- dies	69,092,000	2,878,833	Cotton, Indigo, Cork, Gums, Log- wood, Leaf Tobacco	7,139,000	297,458
1,238,000	51,583	Coffee, Sugar, Sy- rup, Rum, Arrack, Oil, Fruits, Wines, Brandies	10,675,000	444,791	Cotton, Drugs	694,000	28,916
9,318,000	388,250	Coffee, Sugar, Li- queurs, Wines, and, Syrup	8,105 0	337,833	Indigo, Dying Woods, Cochineal, Tartar, Minium, Vermilion	3,183,000	132,625
127,311,000	5,204,622		232,201,000	9,675,039		59,363,000	2,473,454

\* Besides Piasters and other coin to the amount of Livres 5,000,000, or £. 203,333.



# TABLE III.

## GENERAL ABSTRACT OF THE FRENCH EXPORT TRADE

	Produce of the Soil.		Produce of Industry.		Colonial Productions.		Goods re-exported	
	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.
To Europe, including the Levant and the United States of America	93,782,000	3,907,583	133,413,000	5,558,875	156,847,000	6,535,291	40,387,000	1,682,000
Asia	690,000	28,750	520,000	21,666			16,219,000	67,000
Africa	4,306,000	179,416	7,873,000	328,041	Newfoundland Cod		10,654,000	44,000
West Indian Colonies	22,891,000	953,791	43,271,000	1,802,958	976,000	40,666	10,775,000	44,000
	121,669,000	5,069,543	185,077,000	7,711,540	157,823,000	6,575,957	78,035,000	3,250,000

\* In this Article are included Slaves sold to the foreign Islands in the West India Company's Colonies, and the Coin sent to the Levant

## FISHERIES OF FRANCE      PRINCIPAL ARTICLES OF THE FRENCH EXPORT TRADE

IN 1787.      NOT INCLUDING COLONIAL PRODUCTIONS

		Livres.	£. Sterling.			Livres.	£. Sterling.			Livres.	£. Sterling.
Whale Fishery		694,000	28,916	Timber		166,300	6,929	Gloves		428,900	17,870
Cod at Newfoundland, St. Pierre, Miquelon Island, and Shetland		15,731,000	655,458	Pitch and Tar		317,000	13,217	Linseed Oil		174,800	7,283
				Garden Seeds		988,500	41,187	Corks		139,000	5,791
				Flax Seed, &c.		105,600	4,400	Colseed Oil Cakes		449,000	18,708
				Hops		145,600	6,066	Sheep, Calf, and Roe-Buck Skins, tanned		2,705,200	112,716
				Tallow		241,800	10,075	Soap		1,752,800	73,033
				Thread		117,100	4,879	Almonds		850,000	35,416
				Hemp		4,378,900	182,454	Salt Meat		487,700	20,321
				Wool		628,000	26,166	Preserved Fruit		1,518,600	63,275
				Silk		131,900	5,495	Wheat		6,559,900	273,329
				Candles		307,800	12,825	Corn of other Sorts		3,165,600	131,900
				Wax		268,000	11,166	Vegetables		949,200	39,500
				Cordage		1,280,800	53,833	Olive Oil		1,732,400	72,183
				Tanned Leather		116,000	4,833	Eggs		100,000	4,166
				Raw ditto		162,500	6,770	Salt		2,322,500	96,770
				Distilled Waters		144,700	6,029	Brandy		14,455,600	602,316
				Spirits of Wine							
Herrings		4,284,000	178,500								
Mackerel		1,354,000	56,416								
Sardine		2,936,000	122,333								
Soals, Turbot, Tunnies, &c.		5,001,000	208,375								

# TRADE IN 1787.

Re-exported.	Total.	
	Livres.	£. Sterling.
1,682,791	424,429,000	17,684,540
675,791	17,429,000	726,207
443,916	22,833,000	951,373
448,958	77,913,000	3,246,373
3,251,456	542,604,000	22,608,493
Livres. £. Sterling.		
West Indies	559,000	23,271
	5,000,000	203,333

## EXPORTS IN 1787,

### PRODUCTIONS.

£. Sterling.		Livres.	£. Sterling.
17,870	Liqueurs	234,000	9,750
7,283	Bordeaux Wine	17,718,100	738,254
5,791	Other Wine	8,568,200	357,008
18,708	Vinegar	130,900	5,454
112,716	Cattle	5,074,200	211,425
73,033	Mules and Asses	1,453,700	60,570
35,416	Saffron	214,900	8,954
20,321	Verdigrise	512,400	21,350
63,275	Cloth	14,242,400	593,433
73,329	Woollen Stuffs	5,615,800	233,991
31,900	Cotton, Linen,	19,692,000	820,500
39,540	Cambrics.		
72,183	Articles amounting to less than 100,000 Livres are omitted. <i>From Mr. Young's Tour.</i>		
4,166			
96,770			
62,316			

( 65 )

and who know that they could have secured their private interest at the expence of the community.

The trade with France had ever since the peace, and especially since the commercial treaty, been carried on to a great extent, and to the mutual benefit of both nations. (See Table I.) Each found a steady and increasing market for the productions of its soil and its industry; and from the vicinity of the countries, it was conducted with almost the ease and security of an internal commerce. The revolution of France, which soon afterwards hap-

pened, produced a total change in the internal situation of that country, and had a proportionable effect upon its trade. The commotions which attended it, drove great numbers of the most opulent families abroad, and the subsequent confiscation of the property of the clergy, reduced a multitude of persons, before in easy circumstances, to absolute want. The immediate consequence was so great a diminution in the home consumption of the French manufactures, which had there, as in all other countries, been principally supported by the expences of the superior classes of society,



as occasioned the total destruction of several of their most considerable branches. So extensive was the ruin, and such numbers of workmen were discharged, that more than three millions of persons were in the year 1790 without the means of procuring a subsistence.\* The government were obliged not only to grant large sums for their relief from the public treasury, but to authorise the loans that were contracted by the different municipalities on the same account; so that the distressed manufacturers soon began to relish *patriotic idleness and national pay*.

The leaders of the Revolution having degraded the upper ranks of the nation from their consequence, and stripped them of their property, were neither slow nor unskilful in rewarding those who had promoted the change. The new civil and military establishments afforded almost inexhaustible means of gratifying their adherents† with consequence and splendour, the more attractive to

\* See the *Procès Verbaux de l'Assemblée constituante*, vol. 75.

† See Remarks on Mr. Fox's speech at the opening of Parliament,



the *citizens*, as they had been before exclusively reserved to the nobility. The committee of liquidations (which in eighteen months actually paid almost twenty millions sterling, and promised much more) afforded the means of satisfying those who preferred substantial emolument to vain parade. By this means a new class of consumers was created, who not only found it difficult to obtain a supply from their own stagnant manufactories, but gave a decided preference to the more fashionable productions of England. At the same time the ruin of so many families in France, and the wants of those which had taken refuge abroad, occasioned the sale of all their accumulations of moveable property. Whatever was choice and valuable found its way to England: pictures, jewels, libraries, the collections of elegance and taste, the decorations of ancient grandeur, the ornaments of happier days.

By these means, though the foundations of national prosperity were sapped in France, the intercourse with England acquired increased activity. One circumstance, how-

ever, greatly checked the sale of English commodities in France. The exchange had become so disadvantageous, in consequence of the large remittances made from France, either by those who apprehended their property to be insecure in that country, or for the support of the Refugees, and still more in consequence of the paper currency issued by the French government, that all imported commodities rose to an enormous price in France, while those of that country became extremely cheap abroad. But this fall of the exchange, which by its continual increase threatened to destroy the consumption of all foreign goods among the French, was itself the object of a very lucrative speculation to the bankers of Paris and London. As foreign bills of exchange were much the most convenient mode of remitting any sum of money abroad, especially since the most vigilant precautions were taken to prevent coin from being sent out of the kingdom, they were eagerly sought after by the French bankers, and as their value was continually increased by this competition, so the competition was kept up by speculations on the still farther expected

expected increase of their value.\* Though these speculations cannot be considered as a branch

\* The history of the exchange between England and France, though not properly a part of my subject, is too much connected with it to be entirely overlooked. The French Ecu de Change is considered as passing at par when it is exchanged for thirty pence sterling, (and for that reason all the reductions of French money into English, in this publication, are made at that rate) though its exact value was about 29 $\frac{1}{2}$  before the depreciation which took place at the last re-coining of the gold, when twenty-five old louis d'ors were coined into twenty-six new ones, so that the present par is 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ . Previous to the commercial treaty, it had generally been above par, and during the American war was at 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ , but the balance of trade then turning in favour of England, it varied in 1777 and 1778 from 28 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 29. After the Revolution it gradually fell, till in March, 1792, it was reduced to 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ . In that month the Jacobin Claviere, a banker of Geneva, well versed in all the mysteries of stock-jobbing, became the minister of finance. The preceding ministers had collected bills of exchange upon foreign countries to a considerable amount, in order to pay for those supplies which the probability of a war rendered necessary: Claviere re-issued them into circulation, and thus raised the exchange in the same month to 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ . It had declined to 17 when he returned into office, with superior powers, after the destruction of the monarchy, on the 20th of August. He then intimated to the principal bankers, that the *sans culottes* were much inclined to plunder them, and that the ministry would not interfere for their protection, unless they desisted from their speculations, which had occasioned so much loss to their country. This hint, which they knew could easily be realized, had its full effect:



branch of trade, they contributed to extend the general communication between the two countries.

After the commencement of the war between France and the Emperor, the exportations from England, on the accounts of the French government, were very large: but after the destruction of the monarchy, they became still more extensive, and a trade of a new and unnatural kind commenced.— Instead of the commerce between individuals, which the distractions and poverty of the French had nearly ruined, the government became the sole purchaser, and bought up

all speculations were stopped, and no remittances made without necessity; so that the exchange rose (notwithstanding the Prussian invasion) to 19 in September: it afterwards reached 20 in November. The apprehensions of an English war, at which the *commercial* part of the nation were *really* alarmed, and the increased discredit of the paper currency, soon occasioned a rapid fall. In May, 1793, it was depressed to  $4\frac{3}{4}$ . Cambon (the worthy rival of Claviere) raised it again by procuring a decree prohibiting the circulation of those assignats on which the King's head was impressed. This deprived 60,000,000*l.* sterling of their currency of its value, and therefore raised that of the assignats still retained in use, and, together with the project of borrowing 40,000,000*l.* by force, has brought the exchange to about  $8\frac{1}{2}$ .

our manufactures in unheard-of quantities. Their demands of such articles as their army required were without limitation either of extent or price, so that other consumers were driven out of the market, and the whole trade forced into their hands. For the wants of the French army were such as could not be supplied by their own ruined manufactures, and the expences of their government far exceeded the limits of all former prodigality. The cloathing only of their army cost in nine months 551 millions of livres, (£.22,953,333).\* Of this enormous sum a considerable part was expended in England; and the purchases of arms, stores, and provisions, were only limited by an exhausted market, and the impossibility of obtaining farther supplies. These purchases were generally paid for in money or bills of exchange, and frequently paid for in advance; but the money and bills were purchased by the French government of the bankers in Paris, and by them chiefly obtained from those of London; so that however circuitous the

\* See the report of the minister of finance to the National Convention, May 25, 1793.

course might be, the payment in the last resort was always in the French paper currency. This currency having no circulation out of France, and continually diminishing in value even in that country, the French bankers did not suffer it to accumulate in their hands; they employed it in purchasing other bills of exchange, with which they satisfied their foreign correspondents. As long, therefore, as foreign bills could have been procured at Paris, the English bankers and manufacturers would have received a real and efficient payment, provided they had all had the steadiness and foresight to refuse assignats, on whatever terms of advantage they might be offered. But as the purchases of the French government were perpetually increasing, the balances due to England would have become larger and larger, till no means remained of paying them except in assignats; the trade must then have ceased, and, together with the probable loss of a very large balance, have occasioned a declension of our manufactures, and a subversion of our trade, similar in kind to what we have experienced, but infinitely greater in degree: for this shock might probably have been delayed till most  
of



of our manufacturers had been employed in working for the French market, and almost all our foreign trade diverted into that channel. But it is by no means improbable, that the temptation of a great discount, and the hope of being able to dispose of them without a farther diminution of their value, might have induced the English to receive a payment in assignats, particularly when no other could be obtained.

Three circumstances, therefore, distinguished this trade from any other that ever existed; its rapid and unlimited extension, its having the strongest tendency to introduce among us the paper-money of a foreign country, and the certainty of its being stopped in a sudden and violent manner.

The first of these circumstances affords matter of very serious consideration; for though it be the greatest of advantages to a manufacturing country to have a gradually increasing market for its goods, yet, when the question is, whether we will undertake to supply all the wants of a country thrice as large and populous as our own, there ap-

pear two causes of very reasonable alarm. The ruin of our other foreign trade seems the inevitable consequence, as our commercial capital, which is not capable of supplying both, would soon be all attracted into the most lucrative; and as the price of our productions would be so raised by the competition, that they would find no purchasers in any other country. The other danger is of a still more fatal kind, that of raising the price of all commodities to an intolerable degree at home. Those who are in any way occupied in the acquisition of wealth, will, by degrees, augment the profits of their industry in proportion to the increased expences of living, provided those expences are not too suddenly increased. But who can say, in so sudden and violent a change as we have been considering, through what vicissitudes of discontent and tumult, through what clamours of the ignorant, and outrage of the factious, the nation must have passed before every thing resumed its level? and that part of society which has not the means of increasing their incomes, is neither inconsiderable nor useless, and they must inevitably have either fled from their country, or

submitted

submitted to the hardships of want and degradation. For these calamities, an extension of the French trade would have ill compensated: and if it is objected, that I am supposing an extreme case, and that such evils did not actually happen, I answer, that I am pointing out the nature and tendency of the trade, the effects which it did produce in proportion to its extent, and which would have increased with its augmentation.\*

These reasons of alarm would have existed, even if the French trade had been always carried on, by the exchange of real coin or valuable merchandize for our manufactures; but it has been before observed, that if the trade had continued, there was a great probability that our manufacturers would have

\* How rapid an increase would probably have happened in the price of many kinds of goods, may be seen by the following account of the average of wool at the interval of only five months.

Sorts of Wool.	Price in August, 1792.			Price in February, 1793.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
Choice Locks	26	0	0	31	0	0
Super	21	0	0	26	0	0
Head	14	0	0	17	10	0
Downrights	12	0	0	15	0	0
Seconds	11	0	0	13	0	0

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been



been induced to accept the French paper currency. This greatly strengthens the former objections to the trade, as it shews that the market was not only disproportioned to our means of supply, ruinous to our foreign commerce, and destructive to our internal œconomy, but that it might have become a *fictional* market, unless the French government should be able to redeem their paper money. The improbability of this I shall here take for granted, as it will hardly be contested, and I shall hereafter have occasion to return to the subject. It may be asked how the mercantile part of the English nation could be so imposed on as to deal with a *fictional* market? I answer, that it might very probably happen from that spirit of enterprize by which *all* men, and *mercantile* men especially, are tempted to venture the risk of loss in the prospect of great gain. Mr. Wilson, indeed, thinks that commercial men always judge right, both for themselves and the community, though "cabinets are governed by ignorance and caprice."\* I cannot admit this infallibility, but believe that

\* See Mr. Wilson's Letter , 19.

they often mistake their own interest, and still oftener have an interest distinct from that of the public. The present subject affords examples of both those cases; it is well known that many Englishmen, and chiefly *commercial* men, have been credulous enough to purchase abbey-lands in France, and them I shall place in the first class; the distributors of assignats I should rank in the second. The banker who gives his gold, and the manufacturer who parts with his goods, in exchange for these assignats, has no intention of keeping them, but receives them at a great discount, in hopes of parting with them at a less; he knows their value in the market, and that the French government will probably not be bankrupt till they are out of *his* hands; how *soon* it may afterwards happen, and in *whose* hands they may then be, he does not care.

If then the French trade was, as I have shewn, of a nature likely to engross our whole commercial capital, and to exchange it gradually for a currency of imaginary value, the only additional circumstance which the enemies of the nation could wish for to complete

its desolation would be, that after this trade had reached its utmost height, it should meet with a sudden stop. This circumstance would infallibly have occurred upon either of the suppositions which I have stated. I have shown that it must have happened if assignats had been universally refused; it must also have happened, later indeed, but not less certainly, if they had been accepted. For the bankruptcy of the French government is inevitable and approaching, though if peace had continued, and the intercourse of the two nations had been open, it might possibly have been delayed till the real wealth of this country was drained away, and the kingdom converted into one vast workshop for the use of French army. This bankruptcy must instantly have stopped the trade, and involved the whole commercial part of the nation in indiscriminate ruin, a ruin tenfold more grievous, from the enormous profits and extravagant luxury which the trade would have produced while it continued. Of such a crisis the present embarrassments afford happily a very faint and shadowy representation; yet such a crisis we could only have escaped by the interference of the government to stop the trade before it

had



had been greatly extended; that is, to DO THE VERY THING WHICH THE WAR HAS DONE, and which Mr. Wilton assigns as the CAUSE OF OUR DISTRESS.

Having examined the causes which Mr. Wilton states to be the origin of the derangement of our commerce, and having shewn that of the two which really arose from the war, one could have no considerable share in producing it, and the other was the means of preventing much greater evils, it remains for me to shew to what other causes that derangement might be owing, and how far in my opinion, it really extended. By this means we shall be able to judge whether the ministry can reasonably be blamed on account of it, and whether the public have cause to be alarmed at its consequences.

To trace the causes of a general stagnation of trade, it must be necessary to inquire into the state of the country at the time that stagnation happened. The state of England for two or three years past has been sufficiently striking, even to a superficial observer. The spirit of eager speculation and commercial ad-  
venture

Country Banks
 venture never was so ardent, or so generally diffused throughout the nation. Every project imagination could contrive was grasped at with avidity, and the genius of the year 1720 seemed to have returned with complete dominion over the whole body of our traders. Among less important bubbles, two great branches of speculation pervaded every part of the kingdom—country banks and canals. I am far from denying that banks might reasonably be established and conducted on solid principles in towns of considerable trade, and serve an useful purpose in promoting the circulation by which they profited; but it is notorious, that many of them were formed in places where the natural circulation arising from any real commerce would not have produced a profit equal to the expences of their clerks and stationary. Their whole aim therefore was by every sort of artifice to force their own paper into circulation, and to collect all the cash and bank notes of the country round, which they sent up to some London banker, who allowed them interest for their amount, and in his turn supported their credit, when their bills were returned upon them. From the vast number of these banks, and their ardent compe-

competition with each other (besides the ignorance and incapacity of those who managed many of them) they were often great losers by issuing their paper upon bad security; and laid themselves open (as those who have attended courts of justice know) to many ridiculous frauds. They were not only in themselves a very great branch of speculation, but, from the readiness with which they both gave and obtained credit for large sums of money, they afforded an extraordinary facility to every kind of project; and sometimes promoted such as were neither profitable to themselves or beneficial to the public.

As I admit well-conducted banks to be useful to trade, so I readily acknowledge an inland navigation judiciously planned to be of the most essential benefit to the public. Perhaps no other advantage can in any country equal that of an easy water carriage between its several provinces. But the canals lately proposed were not planned on any general system; they were unconnected schemes, many of them very injudiciously contrived, and little likely to answer any purpose of public utility. It is true, that those canals

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which



which are of the greatest advantage to the community, will be in the end most lucrative to their proprietors ; and for this reason the legislature, after making some necessary regulations, will do wisely to suffer such works to be still carried on as private undertakings. But of the canals we are speaking of, a great number were projected by men who had no real design of remaining proprietors, or of completing the work they had undertaken : their only aim was, to impose upon the public credulity by a plausible scheme, and to dispose of their shares at an exorbitant price. By the arts of such men, the country was infected with the frenzy of gambling, and a canal meeting exhibited all the extravagances of the famous South-Sea project.

Even those traders who confined their dealings to their established line of business, and did not engage in the new projects, too frequently suffered themselves to be tempted by the spirit of adventure into concerns too extensive for their capitals.\* Many indeed traded

\* " This complaint, however, of the scarcity of money  
 " is not always confined to improvident spendthrifts. It is  
 " sometimes

traded largely, who, like some of the country banks, had scarcely any real capital at all. The habit of prodigality, and lavish expence necessarily attended that of extravagant enterprize.

Such a state of things led the way by an unavoidable consequence to a stagnation of trade. The most rapid progress of public prosperity could not keep pace with the schemes of projectors: and adventurers could create a fictitious capital much faster than real wealth could possibly accumulate. In the perpetual struggle of rival traders, it must necessarily have happened that those whose resources were least substantial would be crushed: and when credit once began to be shaken, it would inevitably occasion the down-

“ sometimes general through a whole mercantile town, and  
 “ the country in its neighbourhood. Over trading is the  
 “ common cause of it. Sober men whose projects have been  
 “ disproportioned to their capitals, are as likely to have nei-  
 “ ther wherewithal to buy money, nor credit to borrow it,  
 “ as prodigals whose expence has been disproportioned to  
 “ their revenue. Before their projects can be brought to  
 “ bear, their stock is gone and their credit with it. They  
 “ run about every where to borrow money, and every body  
 “ tells them that they have none to lend.”

*Smith on the Wealth of Nations. B. IV. C. I.*

fall of all those fabrics which were raised upon its airy basis. Interruptions like these would certainly have occurred in the most flourishing state of public affairs, and would have occasioned many bankruptcies and much embarrassment in the mercantile part of the society, but being unconnected with any remarkable event, they would have attracted little notice, and produced no general complaint. But it was likewise evident, that any public danger or alarm, which could in any degree affect the credit of the nation, operating upon such a state of things, would destroy the whole system of mutual confidence among individuals, by one rapid and tremendous shock.

By a singular coincidence of extraordinary events towards the close of last year, both these causes operated at once to the distress of our commerce. Speculation had been carried to the utmost height, and reached that state in which it must perish from its own exuberance. It had been so fostered by the new French trade, and by an unexampled extension of credit, that the paper circulating on the faith of individuals has been computed



at two hundred millions sterling,\* ten times ✓  
the annual rent of the whole kingdom. The  
first external check which mercantile credit  
received was by a failure of remittances from  
America, and as it was before unsteady from  
its own magnitude, this circumstance might  
alone have overturned it, for *distrust* very  
readily propagates itself. The houses con-  
cerned in the Russian trade met, about the  
same time, with similar disappointments.  
But events took place much nearer home,  
which widely diffused alarm throughout the  
nation. The Jacobin party in France, of  
whose views and conduct I have before had  
occasion to speak, began to threaten openly  
to new-model our government upon their  
principles. At the same time, no inconfi-  
derable number here, though I hope not  
wicked enough to co-operate in such a design,  
were yet imprudent enough to hold such  
language as indicated no disapprobation of it.  
The alarm was equally increased by the des-  
perate attempts of which we believed the  
Jacobins to be capable, and by the pitiless ty-  
ranny which, from the objects in our streets,

\* See Mr. Wilson's Letter p. 15.

we knew them to exercise at home. A large fleet was equipped in the ports of France while we had none to oppose it; and though its avowed destination was for the coasts of Italy, we had no such confidence in Jacobin sincerity as to regard it without apprehension. At home, obscure rumours and an ambiguous fermentation prepared the public mind for some strange event: and many of the most sagacious and observing looked forward with anxiety to the probability of a crisis in which the firmness of every lover of his country might be put to the severest test, and the nation encounter a danger to which no period of our history can afford a parallel. Such an alarm as this, whether well-founded, or not, (which is not here the question) could not fail of greatly affecting public credit. Accordingly, notwithstanding an exuberance of trade and an overflowing revenue, the three per cent. funds had fallen thirteen per cent. before the proclamation for calling out the militia.\*

\* This, according to Mr. Wilson's mode of calculation, occasioned a loss of thirty-two millions sterling, which must be deducted from the fifty millions he places to the account the war.

The destruction of *private* credit was now inevitable, and though the actual bankruptcies were by various shifts protracted for some time, I believe no possible measures could have saved those traders whose capitals were not proportioned to their transactions. The country banks were universally called upon to realize their paper, which was impossible, from the diminution of circulating cash which they had occasioned; and the greatest part of them had employed their capitals in doubtful speculations. Some of them had attempted to monopolize the raw materials of different manufactures, and after considerably raising the price by their competition, had now large quantities in their possession, for which they could not immediately find purchasers. A greater number had eagerly caught at the advantage of discounting bills, granted at distant dates by the African and West-Indian merchants, from the prospect at once of profiting by the interest, and of circulating their own paper. With these bills they had been so abundantly supplied, and the security of some of them was so doubtful, that it was impossible in this season of alarm to raise money on their credit. In this exigency, the whole  
system



system of country banks was only saved from total ruin by the interposition of the country gentlemen, who associated to support the credit of such as appeared to possess a valuable property, capable of satisfying their creditors when an opportunity should occur of turning it into money. The effects of general distrust were severely felt by every one who was under the necessity of procuring a supply of money; for as a great fall in the price of the funds was expected, and consequently extraordinary profit from the possession of any considerable sum, those who had ready money in their hands were unwilling to part with it on any offer of moderate advantage. The terms on which the loan raised by the government was concluded, sufficiently prove the difficulty of borrowing at that time.

The notes of the bank of England, which had been studiously forced out of circulation, were now the only species of paper currency which retained its credit. They now began to be plentifully diffused, and so large a sum

It has been said that the circulation of bank notes had been diminished no less than £7,000,000 sterling.

+ *How the money?*

in

in gold was drawn out of the Bank, that it has been said some of the directors (not considering that it was become necessary as a medium of commercial transactions, in consequence of the discredit of paper, and that the demand would cease as soon as the quantity required for internal circulation was supplied) confessed some alarm for the credit of the Bank itself. The consequences of such a confession cannot be exaggerated and need not be described. It is, indeed, probable, that had they employed the solid credit of that vast establishment, early and vigorously, in support of that of individuals, most of the embarrassment suffered by houses of real responsibility might have been prevented. We know that it was afterwards in a great measure remedied by the employment of a sum (about £.2,500,000) for which they might without danger have made themselves responsible upon proper security, and in the maladies of credit, above all others, *prevention* is easier than *cure*. The detention of our merchant fleets, and the apprehensions of their capture (the only detriment to commerce really occasioned by the war) contributed to increase the alarm: and the stoppage of the trade with France de-

prived those manufacturers of employment, who had been working for that market, and could not immediately meet with another.

This state of stagnation was evidently temporary, for the causes which had produced it were of a temporary nature ; and of all the sources of our prosperity, that of the French trade only was dried up. What equivalent for that we may expect to obtain, I shall presently examine, and now only observe, that, the total loss of this trade \* would still leave

	* Imports. £.	Average of 3 last years.	Exports. £.	Average of 3 last years.
In 1700	19,130,000	19,476,000	20,120,000	22,576,333
1791	19,669,000		22,731,000	
1792	19,629,000		24,878,000	

Deduct trade with France.

In 1790	495,813	586,502	630,432	996,658
1791	546,057		1,131,376	
1792	717,637		1,228,168	
Remainder	—	18,889,498	—	21,579,675

	Average of 3 last years of peace with America.	Average of 3 last years of peace with America.
In 1773	12,675,000	16,713,666
1774	13,346,000	
1775	14,816,000	
Balance	—	5,277,165
		4,866,009

our



our foreign commerce far more flourishing than at any period previous to the American war. Our agriculture, the great source of national wealth, remained entirely unhurt with all its vast improvements; and internal trade, in comparison of which our foreign trade is but a trifle, had suffered no other check than the diminished consumption which may be supposed to have taken place among the traders who were distressed. It was clear, therefore, that credit and circulation would have revived spontaneously after a crisis of more or less duration, but it was in the power of government to shorten this interval of distrust and inactivity, and this power it wisely has exerted. By instituting a commission with power to issue negotiable bills on the credit of the state to individuals on proper security, it has, without the risk of loss, enabled traders, possessed of valuable property, to convert a considerable part of their capitals into cash. The efficacy of such assistance is not to be estimated merely by the sum advanced; its real effect was in unlocking private coffers, and bringing to the aid of trade the millions that were hoarded in hopes of some opportunity of enormous gain. The

M 2

merchant,

merchant, having a secure resource in the offers of government, was no longer at the mercy of his lender, nor obliged to solicit any assistance which was not proposed to him on moderate terms. By this means, the effects of the interruption of private credit were considerably alleviated, and by the safe arrival of our commercial fleets, and the revival of industry, they may now be considered as nearly at an end. We may now look with confident hope to the prosperity of our commerce, which cannot essentially suffer from a war in which we are masters of every sea; and every harbour of our enemies is blockaded by an irresistible force. But the most decisive proof how little our commercial greatness really suffered from the embarrassments so much complained of, and represented as so destructive, may be found in the state of the exchange. That with Amsterdam in particular may be relied on as a sure criterion, from the extensive business transacted in that capital with every part of the world.\* During the American war it fell to such a degree as

\* The exchange with Holland is computed in Schellings and Groots, of which twelve make one Schelling. Thirty-six Schellings

as to occasion a loss of ten per cent. upon every remittance from hence, but in this supposed season of unparalleled distress it always produced from five to eight or nine per cent. in our favour; notwithstanding the sums necessarily sent abroad by the government, - for the payment and maintenance of our army on the continent.

We shall indulge these hopes with more confidence, if we consider that the war in which we are engaged is in several respects favourable to our trade. I am very far from asserting that to begin, or to continue war, for the benefit of trade, can ever be justifiable either in morality or in sound and rational policy; but it is some consolation among the many real evils which are inseparable from it, to reflect that one usual calamity is in this

Schellings and eight Groots are given for the Pound sterling when the exchange is at par. During the American war the rate was as low as thirty-two Schellings and eight Groots: for the Pound sterling: in April and May last, when the difficulty of obtaining money was greatest in England, it varied from thirty-nine Schellings and seven Groots to forty Schellings and two Groots.

case



case wanting, the destruction of external trade.

The first commercial advantage which this war affords, is, in common with all others, the expences of the war itself. Of the immense sums which are employed in the equipment and maintenance of our fleets and armies a very small part only goes to any foreign country; the rest serves to employ our manufacturers and animate our navigation. This is peculiarly useful in the present instance, as the greatest loss our manufacturers have suffered is from the stoppage of the French market for clothing, arms, and military stores. For these articles the war has opened a new market: the clothing fabricated for the Sans Culottes will be as usefully consumed by our troops and their allies; and the shot destined to lay Amsterdam in ruins may be no less profitably discharged against the ramparts of Lille.

Another source of gain almost equally certain, and much more profitable to the public, will arise from the total interruption of the French foreign trade. That part of the trade which

which arose from the sale of the produce of their soil, must be distinguished from that which consisted in the exportation of their manufactures. In many of the productions of their soil, particularly wine, we cannot pretend to rival them; but of their manufactures there are only a few, which either are not now fabricated in England, or might not easily be imitated there. The English manufactures may therefore be expected to get possession of almost every foreign market during the war; and to retain it after peace shall be re-established, on account of the superior capital employed by our merchants, and the length of time it will necessarily require to restore affairs to their former channels in France.\* It is impossible to ascertain with any precision to what amount this extension of our trade will reach; but it may, without indulging too sanguine expectations, be estimated as a full equivalent for the loss of the trade with France. The Levant trade, that to the Baltick, and to the distant parts of Germany, will probably be almost totally transferred to our merchants, even after the

\* See Tables II. and III.

*† When in the ordinary, beyond what  
would have resulted from the restoration  
of the same capital on land*

restoration of tranquillity, with a very large share of the Italian and Spanish trade, both of which must during the war be completely in our power.

It is apprehended by some, that when the paper money of the French shall be totally discredited, and the national debt extinguished by a bankruptcy of the state, the extreme scarcity of money will render labour and all kinds of raw materials so cheap in France, as to restore their manufactures to a most flourishing condition. This reasoning is not without plausibility, but is contradicted by all experience. Superiority of skill and activity have always been found much more than a counterbalance for the cheapness of labour; the chief effect of which is, to drive the best workmen into some other country, where their industry is better rewarded. Labour, and most kinds of materials, are much dearer in England, than in any other country of Europe, yet our manufacturers are able, wherever the importation of their goods is not checked by heavy duties, to undersell those of other countries in their own markets. But in addition to this consideration it must be recollected



lected that the *capital* of the French manufacturers will be nearly annihilated, their *establishments and machinery* destroyed, their *workmen* dispersed and slaughtered by myriads on the frontiers, and the whole nation corrupted by idleness and enthusiasm. For these reasons I am decidedly of opinion, that for many years after good order shall be restored among the French, their manufactures will be in a very languishing state, and chiefly confined to the fabrication of such coarse goods as the general poverty will require for their home consumption.

Exclusive of our manufactures, many of the productions of our soil, particularly metals,\* may be expected to supply the place of those which before were furnished by the French; but this advantage, though very considerable during the war, will not, perhaps, be equally permanent with the exportation of our manufactures, because the French, after the return of peace, will long have scarcely any commodities to send to any fo-

\* The French used to export some copper and lead to Italy and Switzerland; which probably was a part of what they imported from Sweden and England.

reign market, except the rude produce of their country. The exportation of metals and some other articles may, however, be of durable continuance.

Another very lucrative branch of trade which the French will lose by the war, and by which we may expect to profit, is that of their West India Colonies.\* This we may consider upon two suppositions, that of the conquest of the French islands, which is not only very probable, but is to be desired for the sake of humanity, as the only means of rescuing them from the desolation of the most barbarous of civil wars; and that of their remaining (except Tobago, which is already taken) in the hands of their present rulers. In the first case, it is clear that we should gain the whole advantage of their navigation, together with the immense profit of supplying almost the whole continent of Europe with their productions. This trade used to return upwards of £.6,000,000 sterling yearly to France, of which sum we should gain whatever part was derived from the

\* See Table IV.

# T A B L E IV.

## An Account of the Importation of West India Products into France, in the YEAR 1790.

	Sugar.		Coffee.		Cotton.		Indigo.		Cocoa.	
	lbs.		lbs.		lbs.		lbs.		lbs.	
St. Domingo	150,685,000		45,274,200		3,845,700		1,948,000		600,000	
Martinique and its dependent Islands	33,845,000		9,594,000		1,800,000		126,500		160,000	
Guadaloupe and ditto	30,740,000		7,136,000		1,300,000		179,000		331,000	
	* 215,270,000		62,004,200		6,945,700		2,253,500		1,091,000	
Imported into Great Britain from all the British Islands, on an average of 4 years, ending with 1787	† 196,999,662		3,861,945		7,552,129		111,163		354,700	
	Value.		Exports.		Value.		Value.		Value.	
	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Metals, Wines, Provisions, and all sorts of Manufactures.		Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.	Livres.	£. Sterling.
Imported from the Islands of Bourbon and Mauritius into France, on an average of 3 years, ending with 1787	Coffee 2,723,000	113,458					4,600,000		191,666	

\* This trade employed 600 large ships before the French Revolution.

† All these weights are reduced to the French poids de marc, which is to Avoirdupois Weight as 1.07 to 1.00.



11 JUL 1947

6. The first of the three main groups of the population of the country is the group of the population of the country which is the most numerous and the most important group of the population of the country.

islands which may be conquered. In the other case, the vigilance of our cruizers, and the internal distractions of those unhappy colonies, will reduce their trade almost to nothing. The consequence of this must be a very great increase in the demand for the produce of our own islands, which being insufficient to supply so large a consumption, will be sold at an extraordinary price. In either case, the crops in the French islands will probably be so much diminished, that the European market will be very imperfectly supplied, unless a considerable quantity of sugar is imported from Bengal. Some small encouragement from the legislature would confine this branch of trade to our own shipping, but unless some favourable regulations are made, it will, perhaps, be undertaken by foreigners under a neutral flag.

It is obvious that the Newfoundland fishery of the French will be totally possessed by our merchants during the war; and in all likelihood their share of the whale fishery, and all others not carried on immediately on the coasts of France.\* These will add a very va-

\* See Table III.

valuable article of our European exportations, and are still more important in extending our navigation, and increasing the number of our seamen. These advantages are of the greater consequence, as they will probably be durable.

It is equally apparent, that during the war the East India trade of France will be transferred into our hands; and it is not probable, that as the commercial capital of the French will be almost destroyed, they will, after the restoration of peace, find it their interest to attempt such distant enterprizes.\* The French establishments on the continent of India must fall before our troops without any considerable struggle; and if our government think the conquest of the isles of Bourbon and Mauritius worth undertaking, the forces in India will probably require no assistance, except some ships of war, to accomplish it.†

\* Trade of France to India before the revolution.

Imports to France:

Exports from France.

Livres.

£. Sterling.

Livres.

£. Sterling.

34,500,000

1,437,500

17,429,000

726,207

† See Table IV.

\* Commercial



I shall lastly mention a trade which I cannot without regret make the subject of commercial calculation, the French share of the slave trade will probably be added to our own large portion of that traffic.

This view of the probable increase of our commerce, notwithstanding the war, ought not to appear chimerical and visionary, as it is justified by the experience of the only former war in which, like the present, we were completely masters of the sea,\* and it is the more satisfactory as there is nothing in it incompatible with our recovering, after the restoration of peace, as large a share of the French trade as can be as safe or profitable, and as the exhausted state of that country can afford.

\* Account of the British trade during the war of 1756.

	Imports.	Exports.
1755 - -	8,722,000	11,065,000
1756 - -	7,961,266	11,720,545
1757 - -	8,827,553	12,033,207
1758 - -	8,839,522	12,922,809
1759 - -	8,922,090	13,947,082
1760 - -	9,834,123	14,739,535
1761 - -	9,543,896	14,872,499
1762 - -	8,869,568	13,545,042
1763 - -	10,471,000	14,106,000

I have

I have now examined the evils which have affected our trade, and traced them to their causes; I have shewn that the war had no considerable share in producing them, and that it affords commercial advantages greatly superior to any detriment it can have occasioned. But I am not on this account the less willing to admit, that if any opportunity offers of making a secure and honourable peace, our government ought readily to embrace it. Mr. Wilson and all the discontented here assert that such an opportunity has occurred, and actually exists.\* "The French," say they, "are driven from their conquests; the object of the war is gained, Holland is safe."—But it is evident that Holland is safe no longer than while the French are confined to their own country by a superior force: what security have they given, what security can their present government give, that if the combined armies are dispersed, they will not resume their former conquests? I will suppose for a moment the majority of the Convention to make proposals for an accommodation, and that these pro-

\* See Mr. Wilson's Letters, p. 35.

posals are sincere ; I will suppose them to repeal their decrees of general hostility, to recal their haughty menaces against every other government, and to withdraw their armies from the frontiers ; but what dependance can be placed on the continuance of a power so precarious as theirs ? The same arms of treachery and violence by which they have subdued the party of Brissot and Condorcet, and which in conjunction with that party they before employed against monarchy, may from day to day be turned against *them* by other demagogues equally daring, and equally unprincipled. Amidst the barbarous triumph of a ferocious banditti over the captive monarch and slaughtered nobility of France, the faction of Brissot usurped the sovereignty. With less bloodshed, but with equal courage, was that very faction condemned to prison and to death by their rivals of the *Mountain*. \* The mockery of a decree was passed by the terrified Convention voting under the compulsion of levelled bayonets. The same wild ambition now ferments in minds equally desperate ; the same designs are meditated ; the same in-

\* June 2, 1793.



struments are ready for their execution. With whom then are the allies to treat? If they had made peace with Le Brun it would have been sufficient to provoke the vengeance of the present leaders; if with these they were to conclude a treaty, the next band of hardy conspirators, who in the stormy fluctuations of their troublous anarchy, may wrest the bloody scepter from their hands, will disdain their promises, and trample on their engagements.

Trusting to those engagements, and desirous of tranquillity, the allies may withdraw their forces, and their defenceless provinces will be open to attack. The prospect of plunder, the enthusiastic zeal for propagating their principles, and the wish to divert a mutinous army, and an uncontrollable people from civil commotion, by a foreign war, will urge the French government to hostilities.

In a country in which every man is a soldier, armies are easily assembled; the national guards of Picardy and Artois, together with the garrisons of a few of the frontier towns, would form a formidable body; and the

the fortresses which surround the boundaries of France would furnish an immediate supply of artillery and military stores. On the other hand, the troops which are to repel the invasion must be brought by toilsome marches from the banks of the Danube, and the artillery transported with incredible labour and expence from the magazines of Brandenburg and Hungary. Brabant, a country little capable of defence, would be immediately overrun, and scarcely could any activity of preparation, and any vigour of resistance, snatch the United Provinces a second time from impending conquest.

This would be the state of things, even if we could depend upon the sincerity of the government of France. It would then be impossible to *disarm*. Our fleets must remain equipped; our armies must be cantoned upon the frontiers, at all the expence of actual war, to watch with jealous vigilance the first movements of hostility. We should purchase a precarious and uncertain truce, which might linger for years, and might be broken in a single day, at a cost which can scarcely fail to conduct us to speedy and complete success. Its

only *certain* effect would be to disunite the allies, to weary them with expectation, distract them with mutual distrust, and exhaust them with expence; to animate the enemy, and enable them to confirm their tyranny, as far as such a shapeless pile can be consolidated, by the destruction of all who venture to oppose them in France.

But it is necessary to inquire whether any confidence can be placed in the sincerity of the French rulers. Of this we can only judge by their former conduct. We know that on the 7th of July, 1792, the whole legislative assembly took an unanimous and voluntary oath to *execrate the Republic*; we also know that all the Jacobins among them were at that moment plotting its establishment, and we know by what scenes of horror they soon afterwards actually effected their purpose.\* On the 14th of July, the same

\* "If the enlightened members of this extraordinary commission had not prepared, and even a long time before the 10th of August, those decrees, the salvation of France, of the suspension of the king, of the convocation of the Convention, of the organization of a republican ministry, the revolution of  
"the



same year, they all swore fidelity to the King ; on the 10th of August they tore him from his throne, and, after the lingering torture of a tedious captivity, led him to the scaffold. We know that they assume the power of setting aside the most solemn treaties, upon some pretended principles of their own ; a claim which, while it is made, must deprive them of all right to confidence in the general intercourse of mankind. Their religion, as far as it regards themselves, is indeed a subject for which they are not answerable to any earthly power : but it is impossible for other men not to doubt how far they can be worthy of trust, who despise one of the strongest ties of mutual good faith. The rulers of France have first displayed to the astonished world, the dreadful spectacle of an assembly of law-givers deliberating on the means of destroying all religion.\* Other

" the 10th of August would have appeared in the eyes of Europe only a revolution of cannibals."

*Brissot à tous les Republicains, October 24, 1792, p. 12.*

Such are Brissot's own sentiments of the means employed to bring about that famous revolution of which he always claims the merit of being a principal author.

\* See the various debates on the national instruction, and the public recantations of the clergy.

legislators, in every age, have felt that a superior sanction must add its influence to human laws, which, if they can in some degree regulate the conduct, can never amend the heart. They have delighted to point out a cause which can animate afflicted virtue and suffering fidelity, which can prompt the secret hand of unseen benevolence, and appal guilt with terrors far more formidable than the momentary pangs of agonizing mortality. From a government which disclaims this support, its subjects must look for jealous tyranny, other nations can expect only perfidy.

But if the overtures of such a power are at all times to be received with caution, that caution will be particularly necessary at a time when it has an immediate interest in holding out delusive promises. This is precisely the case of the French government at present.\* To obtain, by a negotiation, a respite of a few months, or even weeks, would enable it to subdue the provinces which are in revolt, or about to rise against its oppression; it would probably afford the means of diffusing jealousy and distrust among the

\* In September 1793.

the allies, and of deceiving some of them into a separate peace; it would give an opportunity to the French fleets to return safely home, and convey all sorts of supplies to their exhausted country; it would oblige the confederate armies to remain inactive, till the winter rendered vigorous operations impracticable;

I have hitherto been reasoning on a supposition that the French have really attempted to open a negotiation for peace; a supposition which I believe to be absolutely false. The Convention have shewn no disposition to recede from any of their claims; and they have, perhaps, so heated the imaginations of a fanatic multitude, that they *could* not recede from them with safety to their persons. The country of Liege, and other parts of the Netherlands, have been annexed to France by decrees, after the French troops were driven out of them. The 121st article of the new constitution enacts, in the same spirit as the decree of the 15th of December, “that  
“ *no peace* can be made with an enemy who  
“ *is on the territory of the Republic.*”\* This

\* To negociate with an enemy within the territory of the republic, is forbidden on pain of death by an express decree.



article seems to cut off all chance of accommodation; for by different decrees, the whole Austrian Netherlands, the principality of Liege, the bishopric of Basle, Savoy, and the country of Nice, form parts of the Republic. That these claims are still insisted on, appears by the fate of a motion lately made to evacuate Savoy, which was rejected by a great majority, because the Convention owes *equal protection to all parts of the Republic*. Are these countries then to be given up to the French before we begin to treat? or, supposing them so moderate as to be contented with the limits of their former territory, will our advocates for peace propose, that Valenciennes, Conde, and St. Domingo, shall be evacuated, in order that the Convention may open a negotiation without violating the dignity of their decrees?

In the proceedings of the Convention may be observed a peculiar animosity against the *English* government, not difficult to be accounted for, when we consider how bitterly their hopes have been disappointed of insurrections and revolutions here, and how severely

severely they have suffered by the hostilities which they have brought upon themselves by their perfidious attack, but which sufficiently shews the improbability of their making any sincere proposals for peace, and affords sufficient reason for that government to be upon its guard against an enemy which never has, on any occasion, shewn a disposition to reconciliation or placability.

It is, however, obvious, that if the French can persuade the English nation that they are really desirous of peace, they will have some chance of effecting their favourite design of exciting discontent against the government; and therefore they will not fail to employ every artifice in their power to diffuse such an opinion. To this we must ascribe what Mr. Wilson very seriously talks of as M. Le Brun's late *application for Peace*.<sup>\*</sup> Mr. Wilson ought in candour to have told his readers, that this late *application* consisted in a letter published in an English newspaper, in March 1793, purporting to be written from M. Le Brun to Lord Grenville, and sent by

<sup>\*</sup> See Mr. Wilson's Letter, p. 35.

the intervention of a commercial house. Such a trick (on whichever side of the water the letter really was written) I should have thought unworthy of notice, if Mr. Wilson had not alluded to it, and blamed Mr. Pitt with great gravity for paying it no attention. Our ministry would have done very ill to attend to a *serious* application from M. Le Brun, whose power was then in fact destroyed, and whose person was soon after proscribed; but if he had been *serious*, would he have chosen such a mode of opening a negociation? The design of this letter was evident—to instil an idea into the minds of the ignorant and the thoughtless, that peace was really prevented by the haughtiness and obstinacy of our ministry. And had we not reason to expect attempts of this nature from the menace of the French, in their declaration of war, to animate the people against the government by an appeal to the English nation? \* Such appeals the English nation will, I hope, receive as they deserve. But much have those Englishmen to answer

\* See the French declaration of war among the addressees to the Convention, published by Debrett, p. 163.

for,



for, who contribute their endeavours to render them effective.

Having seen how little Mr. Wilson's three first positions are founded in fact, we may venture with less alarm to consider the dreadful denunciation in his fourth, "That  
 " an immediate peace is the only means of  
 " preserving our commerce and our go-  
 " vernment from destruction." Alarming it is indeed, if true; for I have proved that an immediate peace cannot be made; and he intimates to us plainly, that \* " unless it is  
 " made, there will be only one alternative;  
 " the government must be overturned, or  
 " the people reduced to the condition of  
 " beasts." This is very terrible; and he repeats such predictions again and again; †  
 " Abject," says he, " as the temper of the  
 " nation appears, it will not, I apprehend,  
 " submit to utter ruin; and I pronounce  
 " coolly, what I have considered deeply,  
 " that nothing but utter ruin can be the con-  
 " sequence." Mr. Wilson's coolness is

\* See Mr. Wilson's Letter, p. 59.

† See Mr. Wilson's Letter, p. 34.

something like that of Sir Fretful Plagiary; but an Englishman is neither accustomed, nor pleased, to hear that the temper of his nation is abject. However great the danger may be, I never before heard it was any mark of an abject spirit to encounter ruin in an honourable cause: but if we had abandoned our allies in the hour of distress, if an English ambassador had been sent to the French Convention, to be the tame spectator of their sovereign's murder, if we were now to solicit a precarious peace from the ferocious Danton,\* unsatiated with the blood of thousands of defenceless captives, I then should confess that the spirit of my country was *really abject*, I then should blush to think myself an Englishman.

But

\* The character of this man, who is now all-powerful in France, cannot be better displayed, than by the following extract from a letter sent by him, as *Minister of Justice*, to all the departments of France, on the 3d of September, 1792, the day of the dreadful massacre in the prisons:

“ The *Commune* of Paris hastens to inform its brothers in  
 “ all the departments, that part of the ferocious conspirators  
 “ confined in the prisons have been *put to death by the people*,  
 “ an *act of justice* which appeared to them indispensable, in  
 “ order to restrain, by terror, those legions of traitors who are  
 “ concealed within their walls, at the moment in which they  
 “ are going to march against the enemy, *without doubt the*  
 “ whole

But after that review of the state of our commerce, contained in the foregoing pages, I apprehend it will not be required that I should oppose any farther reasoning to Mr. Willson's predictions of its ruin, which rest solely upon the authority of his foresight. Yet it will add to our confidence, if we consider what heavy blows our trade has suffered in former wars, and how quickly it has recovered their impression.\* In February 1778, when we had no enemy to contend with, except our American colonies, it was proved

" *whole nation*, after the long succession of treasons, by which  
 " it has been brought to the brink of destruction, *will make*  
 " *haste to adopt this method*, so necessary for the public  
 " safety, and all Frenchmen will exclaim like the Parisians—  
 " Let us march against the enemy, but let us not leave behind  
 " us these ruffians to murder our children and our wives :  
 " brothers and friends, we expect that part of you should fly  
 " to our assistance, and help us to repel the innumerable legions  
 " of the satellites of the despots who are combined for the  
 " ruin of the French. We are going together to save our  
 " country, and we shall owe to you the glory of having snatch-  
 " ed it from destruction."

" N. B. We invite our brothers to have this letter  
 " printed, and to forward it to all the municipalities in their  
 " departments."

\* See Mr. Chalmers's Comparative Estimate, in which interesting work this subject is most ably explained and illustrated by a great variety of striking facts. Published by J. Stockdale.



that our ships had been taken to the amount of, at least, £2,200,000; and that above £1,500,000 of British property was detained in America, and by much the greatest part of it totally lost.\* Of the severer misfortunes which happened afterwards, the complete capture of our most important fleets, and the conquest of our colonies, I shall enter into no detail, but merely remind the public, in how short a time our commerce recovered and surpassed its former greatness, after such multiplied and aggravated calamities.

As to the danger which the war can occasion to our government, I cannot understand its nature, unless the French are successful either in their project of an invasion, or in their attempts to excite discontent; and propagate

\* In the war which was ended in 1748, by the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, 3,238 British ships were taken. The tonnage of British ships declared outwards amounted on an average of the three preceding years of peace

	Tons.
to — — — — —	476,941
on an average of the three last years, to — — —	1,498,121

The loss therefore was more than equivalent, in proportion to the extent of our navigation, to the capture of 10,000 British ships at this time.

sedition

sedition in this country; both of which designs Mr. Wilson no doubt equally abhors, and will be ready to oppose with his most vigorous exertions.

I have now examined Mr. Wilson's four fundamental positions, and as it is on them, that the arguments of those who blame the conduct of the administration must entirely rest, it is not essential that I should enter into any of the collateral discussions which are so frequently introduced, yet some of these are of too interesting a nature to be totally overlooked. The first of them is the consideration of the resources of this country. These Mr. Wilson represents as in the most disastrous state. He computes that a land tax of eight shillings in the pound, and a tax upon the funds, will be necessary for the service of the ensuing year.\* Mr. Wilson is a severe tax-gatherer; but as I have no apprehension that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will resort to his *ways and means*, I think it unnecessary to offer any observations upon them, farther

\* See Mr. Wilson's Letter, p. 72.

than

than to remark that the funds are a species of property of a totally different nature from any other. They are a debt contracted by the government upon conditions, which it cannot violate without incurring the disgrace of bankruptcy. The punctual and undiminished payment of the dividends is among the most essential of these conditions, and certainly could never be infringed in this country without the utter ruin of public credit. There may, indeed, be circumstances of distress imagined, which might excuse, though not justify, the violation of any engagement, but as these circumstances are as yet far distant, it is a more useful as well as more pleasing speculation, to compare the present abilities of the state with those which it possessed on former occasions, when its exertions have been called for.

It is clear, that whatever sums any government may levy upon its subjects, if the income of the nation, after defraying those sums, furnishes a surplus to be added to its productive capital, unless its expences are increased in proportion to the new income furnished by this additional capital, a still larger surplus



surplus will remain at the next period of computation: this will again be added to the capital, and as long as these accumulations continue, the wealth of the nation will increase in a proportion perpetually accelerated. It is impossible to estimate with precision, the progress of national riches, as they arise from the aggregate savings of all the individuals in the state: but it is not difficult, by many obvious circumstances, to discern in which of any two periods of time it has been most rapid. If there have been extraordinary sums expended upon works of public utility, if harbours, bridges, high roads, and inland navigations have been improved and multiplied, if numerous buildings have suddenly arisen, if cultivation has extended over wastes, if shipping has increased, in a manner more remarkable at one period than the other, no one can hesitate in deciding, in which the national capital, and consequently the public power and prosperity, has most rapidly augmented. It will hardly be denied, that all these signs of eminent felicity exist in the nation beyond all former example; but some other circumstances must be taken into consideration, to give an adequate idea of the magnitude

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nitude of its advancement. If, in addition to the vast sums which have been employed in the improvements I have mentioned, a great capital has been absorbed into the vortex of the national debt, it will shew the extent of these resources of public industry and œconomy, which have at once supplied the one, and provided for the other. In this point of view they cannot fail to excite our astonishment. Between the years 1776 and 1786, £.115,190,000 were added to the national debt, yet so completely has the general wealth kept pace with so vast an increase, that the share possessed by foreigners, in our funds, is understood to be much less than in former times, when their extent was comparatively trifling. An addition of £4,864,000, was, in consequence, made in the same time to the annual interest and charge of the debt, and during the late peace many occasional expences of a large amount were discharged,\* while

\* In addition to the increased charges of the national debt, many large sums were raised during the late peace for purposes of a temporary nature, particularly

Debentures granted to the

American loyalists, . . . £. 1,991,000

Extract from Vansittart's  
'Reflections on the  
Propriety of an  
Immediate Conclusion  
of Peace' London:  
1794

copy pp 122 beginning  
"It is clear" to p 127  
line 8 ending "has  
taken place"



1  
Glasgow  
1840

*[Faint, illegible handwriting]*

*[Faint, illegible handwriting]*





while the peace establishment was more considerable than at any former period. Yet the taxes necessary to furnish such extraordinary payments, have not diminished the comforts of the people, or injured any branch of their industry. On the contrary, it is certain that in both these respects a great improvement has taken place.\*

There cannot then be any reasonable doubt, that whatever additional taxes the expences of the war may require, will, if judiciously selected, produce no public inconvenience.

Of which before the beginning of 1793 there had  
been discharged

Occasional miscellaneous services from 1786 to

1791

Armaments in 1787, 1790, and 1791

£. 1,444,000  
929,676  
4,000,000  

---

£. 6,373,676

\* It is impossible to ascertain the sums expended in buildings, canals, roads, enclosures, and other internal improvements, but they are certainly much greater than in any equal space of time. The airy and spacious prisons lately erected have alone cost several hundred thousand pounds. The canals, a species of enterprize almost entirely new, have been still more expensive. Some circumstances which admit of a more accurate statement, will be found in the opposite table.

But,

But, exclusive of any addition to the taxes, several resources of considerable extent may be expected to arise. Of one of these the government has already availed itself, in the stipulated annual payment of £500,000 by the East India Company. Another may be expected from the increase of our West India trade, which I have shewn to be in the highest degree probable: and of this augmentation of revenue, the burden may perhaps advantageously be thrown upon foreigners, by withholding the whole, or part of the draw-back upon the re-exportation of sugar. All the various branches of our commerce will each furnish its share to the riches of government, in proportion to its increase; and though the temporary embarrassments which have taken place this year may occasion some deficiency, we have the utmost reason to look forwards with confidence to the future.

The revenue of 1792, exceeded the probable expences of a peace establishment upwards of two millions; and the spontaneous growth of the permanent taxes, arising from an increased consumption, may be annually estimated, from the experience of the last years

years at more than two hundred thousand pounds.\* From these facts the nation may judge on how vain a foundation the fears of the desponding rest, and how little we are likely to stop the progress of our public prosperity, while we are armed to vindicate the national honour, to defend our constitution from outrage, to protect our allies from desolation, and to restore the general tranquillity of Europe.

But however ample the resources of the state may be, the continuance of war is unavoidably productive of so many evils, that its termination is the natural object of our most anxious wishes, and the subject of a just and rational curiosity. How far the views of France, or of the confederate powers, are likely to be finally successful, we have now, in a considerable degree, the means of judging from the events of the present campaign, and the situation in which they have placed the contending nations. In many wars, after an expensive and bloody contest, the hostile

\* In time of peace any diminution of the revenue which may happen during a war, ought to be considered as so much additional expence.



powers have found themselves exhausted with expence, and enfeebled with mutual slaughter, but in nearly the same relative situation, and as far from the attainment of their wishes as when the struggle began. Not such has been the issue of these hostilities. When the French Convention decreed its declaration of war against Great Britain, its armies were in possession of the whole Austrian Netherlands except Luxembourg, of Savoy, and Nice, and of one of the richest portions of the Empire, that which borders on the Rhine. But these conquests, which might have satisfied the ambition of Louis the XIVth, formed only a small part of the plans of the French Republic.\* The conquest of Spain and of its colonies,

\* These plans are thus traced by Kersaint :

" Asia, Portugal, and Spain, are the most advantageous markets for the productions of English industry."

" We must attack Lisbon and the Brazils, and carry an auxiliary army to Tippoo Sultan."

" The Republics of Italy offer you maritime prizes, of which the loss will fall on the English commerce."

This equally shews the *good will* of France towards other Republics, and her regard to justice, for neither Portugal nor these states are charged with any hostilities, but are to be attacked for the purpose of distressing the English commerce.

" An

nies, the subjugation of Portugal and Italy, the plunder of Holland, the invasion of England, and

“ An expedition directed against the *English East Indies*, would at the same time threaten the *establishments of Holland, the important Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, Batavia, Ceylon, &c.*”

The invasion of *Spain* is next proposed, and (says he) “ you ought to *march to Mexico* while you menace the English.”—

“ If you push the *war in Zealand with vigour*, you will nip the naval force of the Stadtholder in the bud.”

“ By transporting 100,000 *French into England we must terminate the quarrel*, and form with the English a treaty which shall regulate the *destiny of nations*, and found the *Liberty of the World.*”

Extracts from Kerfaint's speech.

Brissot's propositions were exactly similar, see his Report presented Jan. 12th, 1793.

In his letter to his Constituents, he exclaims, p. 65,—“ If instead of limiting to an ignominious defence they (the Ministers) had conceived and executed some of those great expeditions, which brought all the Kings of the Earth prostrate before the Romans, what a noble career opened itself before our eyes!”

He then points out the practicability of all the foregoing designs, with others of a similar nature.—“ In the *West Indies, the English Colonies*, “ which it was so easy to have turned topsy-turvy.”—*Russia and Austria* “ might have been

R

humbled

and the destruction of its distant possessions, besides the complete subversion of the governments then at war with France, were all among the intended enterprizes of a single summer. And though it required no uncommon sagacity to point out the absurdity of such designs, yet it was impossible for those who considered the uncertainty of all human events, and the dreadful consequence which must inevitably attend their accomplishment, not to look with the deepest anxiety on the approaching contest. On the one side there was indeed the greatest prospect of success, from the steady efforts of so many regular and mighty governments, contending in defence of their very existence, and supported by numerous armies, and powerful navies, acting with every advantage of discipline and experience. On the other side, a

*humbled by the Porte.*—Your *Mediterranean fleet*, at that time  
 “splendid, could easily have *persuaded* the Sultan.”—

“Ireland, whose *movements towards liberty* we were bound  
 “to encourage.”—

“Such were the projects that men *long familiar with the*  
 “*nature of republicanism* proposed to the Committee of General  
 “Defence.”—See Brissot's Letter to his Constituents, p. 66.

power



power appeared, unknown in any former age, uniting barbarian fierceness, and the irregular impetuosity of savage multitudes, with all the formidable improvements of modern art, directed by men who had shewn no small sagacity in the destruction of their own government, and who were known to be under no restraints of principle in the means they employed to complete their victory by the overthrow of every civilized state. The leaders of the French Republic hoped at once to subdue resistance by their arms, and enfeeble it by their doctrines. The same arts of subtlety and delusion by which they had so effectually misled the public opinion at home, were exerted with equal diligence in other countries. Thus were disciplined valour, and a systematic employment of the ordinary arms and resources of government, opposed to enthusiastic rage, to the unexpected operations of fertile invention, and to the daring projects and insidious artifices of a band of remorseless and subtle conspirators, disposing without controul, of the opinions, the treasures, and the blood of a mighty nation. The object of the contest was no less than the welfare or desolation of the world. The events of a

few months have happily changed the scene. The allied armies have not only driven the French from all their conquests, except on the side of Savoy, but have made a considerable impression on that formidable barrier of fortresses which, in so many years of successive victories, resisted the arms of Marlborough. The restless demagogues who had projected such vast designs, have, by their own instruments of evil, been driven into exile, or dragged to public execution. The fleet of France has only appeared by stealth upon the ocean, while her richest colonies have become the prize of her antient and dreaded rival.\* Her ships and dock yards have been the prey of flames, and in her cities the barbarity of government has completed the unfinished ravages of war.† After the most violent exertions of the ruling power, after reducing provinces to a desert, and shedding torrents of blood, revolt still rages unsubdued.

\* See the intended operations of the French Navy in Brissot's Letter to his Constituents, p. 51, &c.—30 Ships of the line were to be ready in April, more than 50 in July, fleets to be sent to the East and West Indies, &c. England, he observes, did not *begin to arm till three months after us.*

† Lyons and Toulon.

Yet, as the republican government still continues to maintain itself in France, and even to oppose a menacing aspect, and a tremendous force to its numerous enemies, it is necessary to inquire into the means which it has employed, and the resources which remain to prolong its resistance. On the first it is easy to form a judgement, on the second it is necessary to speak with diffidence and caution, as experience gives us little aid. The party of Brissot which remained in power when the war began, depended for all their exertions on the emission of paper-money. While this could be introduced without much depreciation into commerce, the French republic was enabled, without imposing any burthens upon the people, to pour forth its armies in irresistible multitudes, and to increase its expences almost beyond the powers of arithmetic.\* Lavish for the present, and utterly regardless of all future consequences, it displayed a brilliant but short-lived greatness. In the beginning of the year 1793, the paper currency filled

\* Brissot computes that Cambon added in 18 Months, livres 3,000,000,000. (120 millions sterling to the amount of paper in circulation.

*Letter to his Constituents, p. 88.*

every



every channel of circulation, and the attempts made to diminish its quantity by introducing it into foreign countries, and by promoting the sale of the confiscated lands, produced no considerable effect. The war with the maritime powers contributed to diminish its value, which sunk so rapidly, that the extraordinary expences of the month of May alone amounted to upwards of thirteen millions sterling. The apprehensions of a total and immediate destruction of its currency, obliged the party (called the Mountain) which had forcibly seized the government, to adopt measures, congenial to their dispositions, of undisguised violence and open bankruptcy. A decree was passed forbidding the circulation of such *assignats* as bore the effigies of the late king, but permitting them to be paid in taxes and in purchases of the confiscated lands. This decree, which was a direct act of bankruptcy, had the evident effect of annihilating the little revenue which was left, as all the taxes would certainly be paid in a currency which was of no other use; but by destroying the value of 60 millions sterling in paper-money, it restored some credit to that which was left. The  
confiscated

confiscated lands which might be purchased with it, though of immense extent (for they have been supposed to amount to one-third of the kingdom) were of little value to the government which had neither been able to enforce the payment of any rents, or of late to find purchasers for any part of them.

Other measures of a similar nature were pursued; the dividends of the public funds were suspended in almost every instance, either as belonging to foreigners at war with the state, or as a contribution to the public service.\* All property belonging to those foreigners was confiscated, the subjects of France were forbidden to answer the demands of their correspondents, and enjoined, under the severest penalties, to bring home whatever property they had secured in other countries. A loan of forty millions sterling was imposed by a progressive assessment, so calculated as nearly to effect a general equalization of property. That no criterion might remain to estimate the depreciation of *assignats*, and

\* The interest of the public funds in France was estimated by Chabot, March the 3d, 1793, at livres 367,844,947. £. sterling 15,326,873.

no substitute for their use, the circulation of gold and silver was prohibited. The precious metals were ordered to be collected for the public service, the agents of the government searched for them throughout the country with inquisitorial rigour, and even proceeded to the last extreme of unresisted tyranny, that of putting their innocent subjects to the torture, in order to oblige them to discover their property.\*

By

\* These searches have been made principally by the *revolutionary army*, accompanied by a *moveable guillotine* for the purpose of collecting money, and all sorts of provisions and necessaries for the army. Their mode of proceeding may be learnt from the following account :

“ In the first days of Brumaire last, (the end of October)  
 “ several accusations were made against an armed force call-  
 “ ing itself revolutionary, commanded by Turtot, Aid-de-  
 “ Camp to General Henriot, and said to act under the orders  
 “ of Maillard. (Henriot is commander in chief of the Nation-  
 “ al Guard of Paris, and Maillard a leading member of the  
 “ Commune.) The *Communes* of Thieux and Tully, and a  
 “ number of others in the district of Meaux have been the vic-  
 “ tims of their depredations. In that of Corbeil, the same  
 “ crimes have taken place, but with shocking circumstances.  
 “ The 9th of that month (October 31,) a detachment of 25  
 “ men, making a kind of advanced guard, calling itself a part  
 “ of the revolutionary army, entered at 10 at night the house  
 “ of citizen Gilbon, a farmer of St. Gery, near Corbeil, father  
 “ of



By means such as these, the rulers of France have collected a very considerable sum of money which is carefully reserved for the purchase of foreign supplies, while every internal expence is defrayed in *assignats*; and notwithstanding measures so oppressive have been taken to keep up their value, the quan-

“ of six children; and 71 years of age. The chief of the band  
 “ having surrounded the house, with a piquet of fifty men  
 “ composing his reserve, asked for the master, obliged him to  
 “ get up, and demanded his arms. His wife gave up a fowl-  
 “ ing-piece, the only weapon in the house. They then seized  
 “ the old man, beat him, bound him hand and foot, and put  
 “ his head into a sack. His wife and two female servants  
 “ were treated in the same manner. They took his keys;  
 “ broke his drawers open, and took several trinkets. They  
 “ then asked Gilbon, *where is thy money?* If thou dost not de-  
 “ clare, *the Guillotine is at the door.*—Gilbon begged to be  
 “ unbound to give it up; but they carried him to the fire, and  
 “ placed the soles of his feet on the burning coals. These villains  
 “ broke open the press pointed out, and carried off 72 livres  
 “ in money, and 5 or 6000 in *assignats*.—

“ I must add, citizens, (said Lecointre; who produced the  
 “ proofs of this transaction) *that the terror is so great in the*  
 “ country, THAT THE VICTIMS WHO SUFFER OP-  
 “ PRESSIONS OF THIS NATURE, DARE NOT COM-  
 “ PLAIN, *too happy* (say they,) *to have escaped death.*

*How said some of the* Gazette Nationale, December 15th.

“ This charge was referred to a committee, and *never more in-  
 quired into.*

tity issued by the treasury is more enormous than ever.\*

The same tyranny which directs the management of the French finances extends itself into every department of the government. To describe its horrors would be equally a painful and an unnecessary task, for it ostentatiously displays the most atrocious outrages against humanity and justice, as if it gloried in the detestation of mankind. *Fear* is the *only* principle by which it rules, and a government armed with ten thousand daggers and as many *guillotines*, is undoubtedly very capable of inspiring *fear*. But it is difficult to conceive that any terrors can induce a whole nation to submit to be stripped of all their property, and to risque their lives at the command of self-created despots.† Even if submission is unbounded, the resources of oppression must soon exhaust themselves.

\* The *monthly deficiency* of the French revenue is about 12 millions sterling.

† The price of most commodities being fixed by law, and paid in a paper which is accumulating to a degree that will soon render it no longer a sign of value, a virtual destruction of all property has taken place.

Industry must cease, where its spring, the principle of property, is destroyed. Every production of human art, the offspring of industry, must perish with its parent. The elegancies and comforts of civilized life are already lost in France, the mere necessities of animal existence are becoming scarce, and soon will disappear.

The object of the government is to form a people completely military. For this purpose, the whole nation has been ordered to take arms, and vast multitudes have been moved to the frontiers by the allurements of immense distributions of *assignats*, or the dread of rigorous punishment.\* The impulse

\* Resolution of the department of Herault, approved by the Convention, September 20, 1793.

" All fathers and mothers shall be bound to declare the place of abode of their children, summoned by requisition.

" Citizens are forbidden to harbour or conceal any of those young men.

" The light-horsemen shall be authorized to arrest all those who shall appear to them to have been put in requisition; to



pulse of these immense bodies, animated with the hopes of plunder, and the intoxication of strong liquors, has in some instances produced a considerable effect. But the difficulty of procuring subsistence, which never fails to impede the operations of very numerous armies, must act with peculiar force against these unwieldy masses, untrained to subordination, and incapable of a regular system of supply. Their efforts must be rapid and desultory, and every movement they make must contribute to render all future exertions impracticable by exhausting the provinces through which they pass. It is not probable that this system of violent enrollment can survive the ruin of the French finances, by the profusion of which it has hitherto been supported.\* But even if the

“ lodge them in a *gaol*, if they endeavour to escape from the  
“ decree of requisition.

“ The municipalities shall be bound upon their responsibility to make *domiciliary visits twice a week* in order to  
“ discover deserters.”

\* The French armies since the revolution have received considerably more than double their ancient pay, and having arms in their hands, know very well how to enforce the law which fixes the price of commodities.

ardent

ardent zeal of the French armies is supposed to supersede the necessity of pay, it cannot resist the impressions of immediate distress. A country in which industry is oppressed by rapine, will soon cease to produce prey for its spoilers, and the miserable resources of fraud and pillage will very feebly assist the government in its endeavours to procure foreign supplies.\*

The disaffection of the military force, whether it shews itself in the form of submission to the confederate powers, or of an internal declaration in favour of Royalty, must be equally destructive to the present system of democratic tyranny. That the rulers are not without apprehensions of it, appears not only from the jealousy shown of the inhabitants of the frontier towns, but from the visible resolution to destroy the force of all the great provincial cities; two have been ordered to be razed to their foundations, others have been sub-

\* The latest accounts from France give reason to apprehend a general famine *this year*, as it is supposed that the provision of corn is not sufficient to last beyond March, and the consumption is very great, owing to the absurd law for regulating the price of necessaries and the wants of the armies.

dued

duced by massacre and confiscation.\* By this means they hope to destroy the seeds of any opposition to the power of Paris on which their own dominion is established. But the resources of Paris, though great, are not inexhaustible, and have long been drained by the most rigorous oppression: and a capital which derives its subsistence from the rapine of the revolutionary army, cannot long hope to be secure from want; its ferocious and deluded populace will then become the terrible ministers of vengeance on those leaders who have so long been the inflamers of their passions, and the instigators of their crimes.

But some persons are apprehensive, and more affect to be so, that the resources of the allies will be exhausted before these changes can take place. Those of our own nation I have considered. The Emperor, the principal of our continental allies, though still embarrassed by the expences of the Turkish war, possesses the means of exerting a prodigious force. The Austrian troops are equally numerous and hardy, and are accus-

\* Bourdeaux, Rouen, Marseilles, Strasbourg, &c.



tomed to serve upon a very trifling pay. An inexhaustible fund of recruits may be drawn from Hungary, and the Slavonian regions; and the expences of conveying the heavy artillery to the seat of war, having been once incurred, will not require repetition: nor are his finances, though so contemptuously spoken of by Mr. Wilson, by any means in an alarming state;\* his revenues amount to about £.9,250,000 sterling, and in 1788 were only charged with a debt of £.22,000,000. He may therefore be confidently said to have much greater pecuniary resources than any of his predecessors ever had, except the late Emperor Joseph, in the latter part of his reign.

The king of Prussia is known to defray his expences from the treasure accumulated by the late king; and therefore not to have immediate occasion to resort to taxation, or to loans.

\* Mr. Wilson says that the Emperor gives nine per cent. for the money he borrows; where he gets his information I do not know all: the loans I am acquainted with have been made at the interest of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. the principal to be paid in ten years.

The Dutch republic, though heavily taxed, is able to raise large sums on very easy terms; from the great extent of its commercial capital.

The king of Sardinia, whose revenues are small, necessarily requires some pecuniary assistance, which will be thought very wisely afforded if we consider the great advantages which may be derived from a vigorous employment of his forces. His dominions comprise the principal passes of the Alps, and have always been considered as the key of Italy, a country, the pillage of which would afford great resources to the French ravagers, and which could not oppose a very effectual resistance to an invasion; while from their proximity to the southern provinces of France, they afford every advantage to any enterprize which may be undertaken against them.

I have now only to mention the resources of Spain, which, both in respect to finance, and to military and naval force, are known to be in a state more prosperous than that country

country has experienced for many generations.

Thus I have shewn that the war, far from being caused by the ambition and resentment of the English cabinet, is solely to be ascribed to the restless machinations and violent aggression of the French. Forgetful of ancient animosity, all parties here concurred in the sincerity of their wishes for the liberty and happiness of their rival nation, however they might differ in their judgement of particular characters and measures. Amidst the weakness and distractions of the French, the name of England was never heard but as the refuge of misery, the compassionate protectress of affliction and distress.

I have shewn that the evils frequently attributed to the war, have either no real existence, or are derived from other causes; and that none are to be apprehended capable of materially affecting the public prosperity, which, in times of real danger, has risen superior to so many calamities. I have shewn that the present contest is likely to be

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short,



short, and that the nation may look forward with confidence to a situation still more flourishing.

But it must never be forgotten, that the basis of all our welfare is a constitution which ensures public tranquillity, and preserves the rights of property and personal liberty inviolable. If this is injured by the wild attempts of innovation, that prosperity may be destroyed, which has neither decayed by the lapse of ages, nor been shaken by the storms of war. The spirit of our laws, diffusing equal protection over all, has animated industry with elastic vigour, and fanned the brightest flames of genius. This venerable deposit, guarded by the wisdom and patriotism of our ancestors, is now committed to our care, and we are to determine for ourselves and our posterity, whether it is more glorious to remain the genuine countrymen of Alfred, of Newton, and of Locke, or to bow in the *French Pantheon* among the worshippers of Rousseau and Voltaire.

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## A P P E N D I X.

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**I** DID not think it adviseable to interrupt the narrative of the events which occasioned the war between France and Austria, by an account of the negociations that were carried on between those powers; but as they tend to illustrate the subject, I have added a short abstract of them by way of appendix.

In the treaty of Westphalia, signed October 24th, 1648, the sovereignty of Alsace, and part of Lorrain, is ceded to the crown of France;\* but the rights and possessions belonging to several princes of the empire in these countries are guaranteed to them in the same manner as they were enjoyed before the war

\* See the treaty of Westphalia, articles seventy-one and seventy-three.

then concluded.\* The decree passed by the National Assembly of France, on the 6th of August, 1789, and the subsequent decrees for abolishing feudal and manerial rights, which was the nature of most of these possessions, were carried into immediate execution, as well with regard to the possessions of those princes, as to those of the subjects of France. The princes who were aggrieved, applied for the protection of the Emperor, who wrote to the king of France on the subject, December 14, 1790. The French government refused to restore the rights claimed, but offered to enter into a negotiation for the purpose of settling an equivalent. This was deemed unsatisfactory by the German princes, who insisted on preliminary restitution. The subject was in consequence referred to the diet of Ratisbon, by an Imperial commission, dated April 26, 1791. The 6th of August, in the same year, the diet came to a resolution to demand the exact observance of the treaties, and to request the

\* Particularly the princes of Wirtemberg, article thirty-three, and the bishops of Strasbourg and Basle, and several other princes, specified in article ninety-two. See also the third, eighth, eleventh, and thirteenth articles of the treaty of Riswyck, September 20th, 1697.



Emperor to enter into such negotiations as he might judge adviseable for that purpose, and to take the measures necessary for re-establishing good order in the different circles, and of providing them with a respectable force.\* The Emperor returned a civil answer, October 23d, to the notification sent by the king of France of his acceptance of the constitution, and took no step in consequence of the resolution of the diet, till December 3d, 1791. He then wrote a long letter to the king of France, to insist on the literal observance of the treaty of Westphalia, making at the same time the most amicable professions. In the mean time the French having assembled a considerable army on the frontier, threatened the Electorate of Treves with an immediate attack; Prince Kaunitz signified to the French ambassador at Vienna, on the 21st December, 1791, the Emperor's resolution to protect the Elector, provided he dispersed the bodies of armed emigrants in his dominions. On the

\* The fourth article of this *conclusum* takes notice of the difficulty of negotiation, arising from the captivity of the King of France, who was in close confinement at Paris.

For the declaration of Pilnitz, which was issued in the mean time, see p. 36.

6th of January, 1792, M. de Lessart, the minister of foreign affairs, announced to the National Assembly the willingness of the Elector of Treves to give satisfaction to the French government: yet on the 26th January, the National Assembly passed the following decree:

1st. The King shall be invited by a message to declare to the Emperor, that henceforth he can only treat in the name of the French nation, and in virtue of the power delegated to him by the constitution.

2d. The King shall be invited to demand of the Emperor, whether as chief of the house of Austria he means to live in peace and good intelligence with the French nation, and whether he renounces every treaty and convention directed against the sovereignty, the independence, and the safety of the nation.

3d. The King shall be invited to declare to the Emperor, that on his *failure to give to the nation before the 1st of next March, full and entire satisfaction on the points, abovementioned;*  
his

*his silence, as well as any evasive and dilatory answer, will be considered as a declaration of war.*

4th. The King shall be invited to continue to take the most speedy measures that the French troops may be in readiness to take the field on the first order.

To the representations made in consequence of the decree by the French minister at Vienna, Prince Kaunitz returned on the 17th of February, 1792, an answer of considerable length. He first shews, that the orders given to Marshal Bender to defend the Electorate of Treves, if attacked, had no purposes hostile to France, as they were confined to the case of the Elector's giving complete satisfaction to the French government with regard to the dispersion of the emigrants. He then explained the nature of the declaration proposed by the Emperor to several other monarchs during the imprisonment of the king of France.\* He declares that since the royal family were released, and the royal authority

\* This declaration, which is inserted at length, is the same in substance as that of Pilnitz.

restored,



restored, the concert of the Emperor, and other powers, has only subsisted eventually, in consequence of the appearances of disorder, which gave occasion to apprehend a return of the same dangers to the king and his family. He attributes these dangers to the influence and violence of the republican party, which he charges with an intention of forcing their country into a war, as well as of instigating revolt in the Netherlands and other states.\* He concludes with expressions of the Em-

\* Whether Prince Kaunitz was mistaken, may be known from the declaration of Brissot, then a principal leader in the Convention:

“ They accuse me of having provoked the war! and without the war royalty would still subsist! and without the war we should be covered with ignominy! and without the war a thousand talents, a thousand virtues, would not be unfolded! and without the war, Savoy, and so many other countries, whose chains are falling off, would not have had their liberty!”

*Brissot à tous les Republicains, p. 8.*

“ What did enlightened republicans think before the 10th of August, men, who wished for liberty, not only for their own country, but for all Europe? They believed that they could generally establish it by exciting the governed against the governors, by letting the people see the facility and the advantages of such insurrections.”

*Brissot to his Constituents, p. 74, published by J. Stockdale.*

peror's

peror's attachment to the King of France, and good will to the nation. This answer was supported by a declaration delivered February 23d, by Comte de Goltz, the Prussian envoy at Paris, that his master would, in consequence of his alliance with the Emperor, consider an invasion of any part of the Empire as a direct act of hostility against himself. The French ministry replied by instructing their ambassador to declare to the Emperor, that it did not become the dignity and independence of the French nation to enter into any discussion on subjects which related to the internal affairs of the kingdom—to demand the dissolution of the concert spoken of—and to offer on those terms, and that of the Emperor's recalling all the troops sent into the Netherlands and Brisgaw, since April 1st, 1791, to reduce the French army to a peace establishment.\* These proceedings did not appear sufficiently energetic to the National Assembly, who, on the 11th of March, impeached M. de Lessart, the minister of foreign affairs, for his want of vigour, and sent him to the prison of Or-

\* See M. de Lessart's speech to the National Assembly on the 1st of March, 1792.

leans. The Emperor (Leopold) had died in the mean time March 1st. On the 18th of March, M. Dumourier, the new minister for foreign affairs, wrote to M. de Noailles, the French ambassador at Vienna, directed him to press the Austrian ministry vigorously, observing that M. de Lessart's disgrace was chiefly owing to the weakness of his negotiation. M. de Noailles answered by desiring to be recalled. On the 27th M. Dumourier reiterated his injunctions to M. de Noailles, to act with energy, observing, that if " the  
 " declaration of the court of Vienna is not  
 " *very speedy and very frank*, the king will,  
 " *at the return of the courier* which you  
 " *send back, consider himself decidedly as in a*  
 " *state of war.*"

On the 13th of April M. de Noailles was also impeached for indecisive conduct: and M. de Maulde was sent to Vienna as ambassador extraordinary. The Austrian ministry, by an official note of the 18th of March, as well as by verbal communication between Comte Cobentzel and M. de Noailles on the 4th of April, denied any views hostile to France, and any intention of supporting the cause of the emigrants, but adhered to the *con-*



cert as a measure merely defensive, and which the King of Hungary was not at liberty to renounce without the consent of the other powers concerned. This answer appearing unsatisfactory to the French ministry (*which was then entirely composed of Jacobins*) the Council made a report to the King on the necessity of a declaration of war; in consequence of which he was obliged to go down to the National Assembly, and propose it on the 20th of April. The declaration was accordingly carried, amidst the greatest applauses, by a vote nearly unanimous.

From this account of the negociations carried on previous to the war between France and Austria, as well as from the facts mentioned in the narrative of the events which accompanied them,\* it appears that the French declaration of war was not rendered necessary by any hostility, or provoked by any intended attack, but was a wanton and long premeditated aggression, arising from the ambitious and cruel policy of the Jacobins. Yet they have ventured to assert, with a degree of obstinacy which has produced no inconsiderable effect,

\* See p. 35.

not in France only, but all over Europe, that a coalition of princes for the invasion of France was the real cause of the war.

It has, however, happened in this case (which perhaps never happened in any other war) that all the parties concerned agree as to its causes. The Austrian ministry, strongly disavowing any hostile purposes themselves, attribute it to the influence and violence of the republican party in France; the French Republicans (as I have repeatedly shewn in the foregoing pages) avow and glory in it; the sentiments of those among the partizans of the late French Constitution who were best acquainted with these transactions, are exactly similar.

M. de Noailles, the ambassador at Vienna, concludes his letter of the 5th of April, 1792, with these words: "According to all my notions, the court of Vienna has adopted a *plan purely defensive*, notwithstanding the instances of the court of Berlin to make it adopt another."

M. de

M. de Lessart's opinion may be learnt by a confidential letter written by him to his friend M. Necker, *from the prison of Orleans*, July 8th, 1792, on which the impending dangers with which he was surrounded, and the succeeding atrocious circumstances of his fate, stamp the authenticity of a dying declaration. He complains that he has not received the papers necessary to compose his defence; "which," says he, "will be curious, not on my account, but by the manifestation of what has passed in foreign courts, by the demonstration that no one wished to make war upon us, by the unanswerable proof that it is we who have provoked it, who have begun it, who have set Europe against us." This defence he was prevented from ever making, by murder.

Such was, in this instance and not in this instance only, the policy of the Jacobins, to stifle truth by bold and obstinate falsehood, and to extinguish evidence by massacre.

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"THE translator of the above work brings forward to the English tribunal of opinion, the testimony of a witness beyond all exception. His competence is undoubted. He knows every thing which concerns this revolution to the bottom. He is a chief actor in all the scenes which he presents. No man can object to him as a royalist: the royal party, and the Christian religion, never had a more determined enemy. In a word, it is BRISSOT.—It is Brissot the Republican, the Jacobin, and the Philosopher, who is brought to give an account of Jacobinism, and of Republicanism, and of Philosophy."

"The



" The English reader will draw from this work of Brissot, and from the result of the last struggles of this party, some useful lessons. He will be enabled to judge of the information of those, who have undertaken to guide and enlighten us, and who, for reasons best known to themselves, have chosen to paint the French Revolution and its consequences in brilliant and flattering colours.—They will know how to appreciate the liberty of France, which has been so much magnified in England.—They will do justice to the wisdom and goodness of their Sovereign and his Parliament, who have put them into a state of defence, in the war audaciously made upon us in favour of that kind of liberty.—When we see (as here we must see) in their true colours the character and policy of our enemies, our gratitude will become an active principle. It will produce a strong and zealous co-operation with the efforts of our government, in favour of a constitution under which we enjoy advantages, the full value of which, the querulous weakness of human nature requires sometimes the opportunity of a comparison, to understand and to relish."

" Our confidence in those who watch for the public will not be lessened. We shall be sensible, that to alarm us in the late circumstances of our affairs, was not for our molestation, but for our security. We shall be sensible that this alarm was not ill-timed---and that it ought to have been given, as it was given, before the enemy had time fully to mature and accomplish their plans, for reducing us to the condition of France, as that condition is faithfully and without exaggeration described in the following work. We now have our arms in our hands: we have the means of opposing the sense, the courage, and the resources of England, to the deepest, the most craftily devised, the best combined, and the most extensive design, that ever was carried on since the beginning of the world, against all property, all order, all religion, all law, and all real freedom."

" If Europe could not be saved without our interposition, (most certainly it could not) I am sure there is not an Englishman, who would not blush to be left out of the general effort made in favour of the general safety. But we are not secondary parties in this war; *we are principals in the danger, and ought to be principals in the exertion.*

If any Englishman asks whether the designs of the French assassins are confined to the spot of Europe which they actually desolate, the citizen Brissot, the author of this book, and the author of the declaration of war against England, will give him his answer. He will find in this book, that the republicans are divided into factions, full of the most furious and destructive animosity against each other; but he will find also, that there is one point in which they perfectly agree--that they are all enemies alike to the government of all other nations, and only contend with each other about the means of propagating their tenets, and extending their empire by conquest."

"In a cause like this, and in a time like the present, there is no neutrality. They who are not actively, and with decision and energy, against Jacobinism, are its partisans. They who do not dread it, love it. It cannot be viewed with indifference. It is a thing, made to produce a powerful impression on the feelings. Such is the nature of Jacobinism, such is the nature of man, that this system must be regarded either with enthusiastic admiration, or with the highest degree of detestation, resentment, and horror."

"Such partisans of a republic amongst us, as may not have the worst intentions, will see, that the principles, the plans, the manners, the morals, and the whole system of France, is altogether as adverse to the formation and duration of any rational scheme of a republic, as it is to that of a monarchy absolute or limited. It is indeed a system which can only answer the purposes of robbers and murderers."

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